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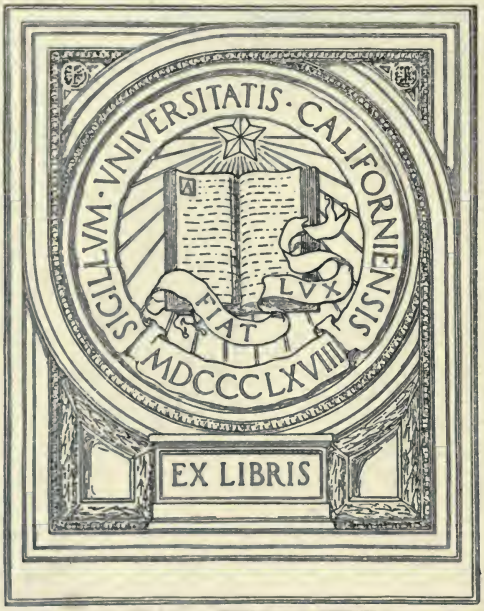

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THE

VELVET CUSHION.

by
John William Cunningham

Senectus naturâ loquacior.

CICERO.

London:

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STRAND;

By G. SIDNEY, Northumberland-street.

1814.

DEDICATION.

TO THE

CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

With filial reverence I presume to lay upon your altar, the following little history, trusting that it may serve to remind your enemies of some of your excellencies, and your friends of many of the duties which a good Churchman owes to himself, to his Church, to his Country, and to his God.

I am, &c.

THE AUTHOR.

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THE

VELVET CUSHION.

CHAPTER I.

THE Vicar of a small parish church, whose turrets nodded over one of the most picturesque lakes of Westmoreland, although no believer in necromancy, stood aghast one day at perceiving the increased bulk of his velvet cushion. Few men could have better pretensions to be intimately acquainted with this throne of theology than himself. He had pressed with a succession of excellent sermons, for five and thirty years, that side of it which was now uppermost. And he was scarcely less familiar with the other side. For, on his first institution to the living, he had, in the true spirit of economy, used that face which was worst for

upwards of ten years. But, when his zeal had actually beaten a hole in it, the dignity of the establishment demanded a change; and this brought the other side into use. Nor was it merely his sabbatical intercourse with the cushion which had given him this intimate knowledge of it. His attention, since the moment of his induction to the vicarage, had been particularly drawn to it by many current rumours in the parish. It was reported, for instance, to be one of the oldest cushions in the three kingdoms. It had certainly afforded a resting place to the divinity of fifteen or twenty of his predecessors in the vicarage. Nor had even they known it in the earliest stages of its ecclesiastical career. Report said that it had seen many vicissitudes, and travelled through successive ages—that it had been swept by the tunic of a Pope's nuncio—had descended to the pulpit of one of the first puritans—had been expelled by some of the second puritans, as an impious adjunct

adjunct to the simplicity of primitive worship—had risen again with the rising fortunes of the monarchy—and, after many chances and changes, had climbed the mountains of Westmoreland, to spend the years of its grand climacteric in the quiet and unambitious pulpit of the vicarage. Now, as our vicar was somewhat of an antiquarian, all these rumours invested the cushion with inconceivable dignity in his eyes. He considered it as a sort of monarch in retirement. He never touched it without feeling himself, as by a chariot of fire, carried back into the most remote periods. He would often display it with a smile of triumph to his clerical visitors, whose larger benefices were, in his view, but a poor compensation for so splendid a possession. And this he continued to do, though he rarely succeeded in creating any other surprise in his auditors, than that the parish should not be liberal enough to find him a better. Being moreover a thinking man, he would often

philosophize over his cushion ; and marvel what effect the same number and variety of sermons which had been delivered in its presence, would have produced upon the mind of a sentient being—which of the systems, all equally indifferent to the cushion, he would have embraced—whether he would have settled down, as the vicar deemed he ought, into a sound churchman, or whether, amidst conflicting opinions, he would, like a vessel amidst contending tides, have been left as neutral and motionless as the cushion itself. " O !" he would add, " that I could but see the history of my cushion." And, as he began to fall into that common infirmity of age, the recurring often to a few darling topics, his neighbours were compelled to hear the wish pretty often repeated. I mention this circumstance as tending, perhaps, in some measure, to explain its present mysterious expansion. But to return to our history.

Putting these various circumstances together,

together, I may surely venture to repeat the assertion, that few divines could have better pretensions than our venerable Vicar to be acquainted with their cushions. Neither time, nor opportunity, nor importunity, had been wanting for the fullest scrutiny of its shape, bulk, and complexion. Whence, then, could the aforesaid expansion of the cushion arise? He put on his glasses, then rubbed his eyes, and then the glasses themselves—but he still saw his old friend with a new face. Conceiving, however, that his eyes and glasses, however long and confidently trusted, might not, after all, be infallible—conceiving, in short, any thing more probable than the mutability of his immutable cushion, he resolved to bring it to the test of another sense. What, then, was his confusion and dismay when, having put his hand on it, instead of finding it yield, as usual, to his touch, he felt some resistance to his pressure. Here was, indeed, cause for terror. He absolutely started back. It happened,

pened, unfortunately, to be verging towards November, and the fifth of that terrible month at once arose, like an apparition, before him. A rumour had lately reached him, that the Catholics were petitioning our good old king for emancipation; but what if they were secretly taking a more summary method for the accomplishment of their wishes. What, if instead of filling cellars with combustibles, their scheme should be to cram velvet cushions with them! What, if the very instruments of ecclesiastical dignity and usefulness were now to be converted into instruments of assassination! What, if every true son of the Church was designed, at some given moment, at some critical conjuncture, perhaps in the precise act of praying for Church and King, to receive the contents of his cushion in his bosom. Horror, doubt, suspicion, the pride of discovery, the fancied smell of gun-powder, the fear of a premature explosion, were almost too much for the old gen-

gentleman. Such a trembling of nerves—such a revulsion of blood to the heart, he had scarcely ever experienced before. As his system, however, began to recover, he discovered somewhat less ground for alarm. But, whether his suspicions might be well or ill-founded, nothing appeared to be of such importance as investigation and secrecy. His resolution, therefore, was soon taken. In the dusk of the evening he mustered courage to enter the church alone, to seize the supposed organ of conspiracy, and to carry it to his own study. But, when there, what was to be done with it? There was one bosom which shared all his joys and sorrows. He had a wife who was the pillar of his little fabric of worldly comforts. Their two heads, laid together, rarely failed to hit upon a contrivance for every daily emergency; and, at length, after a much longer conference than usual, it was resolved, at once and heroically, to unbowel the cushion. The solemnity may be conceived

ceived with which the aged couple seated themselves to the task of ripping up their velvet friend with a view of tearing from the womb those plots on which the destiny of the nation might be suspended. But how shall I describe the amazement and the joy with which he, and therefore she, saw inscribed at the head of a large roll of paper, which soon met their eager eyes,—" My own history." It scarcely occurred to our ecclesiastic, that velvet cushions cannot ordinarily either think or write—for having just begun to study the new system of education, he did not know to what perfection it might have been suddenly brought. Nor did it at all occur to him, that his above-mentioned philosophisings on the cushion had been often listened to with profound attention by a thin, queer, ill-looking, dirty, retired sort of man in the next village, who was said by the country-folks to be either a conjurer or an author. The wish of his heart was granted to him—a history

of

of his velvet cushion—and little recked he whence it came, or who was the historian. Another candle was instantly lighted, his glasses polished, the sofa wheeled nearer to the fire, (for it was in the month of December) and he began to read the memoir which follows.

CHAPTER II.

'THE first place in which I remember to have seen the light was in the shop of an upholsterer in Fleet-street, in the days of bloody Queen Mary. You, Sir, who feel something, though I rejoice to say little, of the ravages of time in your own person, (the old lady, notwithstanding the qualifying word 'little,' looked somewhat grave and angry) can easily believe that I have lost much of my original dignity. I was then as splendid as gold and tassels could make me. Several of my species lay near me, and none of them less magnificently caparisoned than myself. Of these alas I soon lost sight.—'Dear, lost companions of my tuneful art,'—they have long since fallen before that besom which sweeps the high and the low, the velvet and the serge, into one indiscriminate grave. I soon heard myself destined by

by the master of the warehouse to the pulpit of a great church in the metropolis, and thither I was, next day, transported in a coach. And here, Sir, I beg to observe, that I was not always able to write my own history. In fact, when I entered the church, nothing could be more ignorant than myself. I had heard only the conversation of the manufactory. But my new circumstances gave me great advantages. It soon occurred to me, that in so busy a world even a cushion could not be meant to be idle. As my nature, therefore, unfitted me for action, I determined to give myself wholly to thought and speculation. You, Sir, who both think and act, will not despise those who do only the former. The Arabs, indeed, as I have heard, when they take a prisoner, always first ask him what he can do? And when a French Sçavans, whom they caught, hoping to escape manual drudgery, told them, in reply, that he was accustomed only to sedentary

tary pursuits—they, by way of turning him to account, actually tarred and feathered him, and set him to hatch eggs. But Arabs are barbarians, and in my native country I could not fear any such indignity. But to return.—If my nature disposed me to thought, so did my circumstances. From the Pisgah of the pulpit I have seen most of the great men of successive ages, whom piety, custom, accident, or their wives, have brought to church. In the same commanding situation I have heard all the best preachers of three centuries. Thus all the grand questions in religion and morality, and, by dint of fasts and thanksgivings, in politics, have been submitted to my consideration. And, when conveyed for warmth during the week, from the pulpit to the vestry, I have heard all sorts of questions discussed, in all sorts of tempers, by all sorts of men. The clerks, sextons, and pew-openers, also, a class of persons falsely thought to have little to do with the affairs

affairs of the church, except to take one fee for burying the dead, and sometimes another for digging them up again, have given me much information. They play, indeed, inferior parts in the ecclesiastical drama; but, as far as free and fluent elocution goes to form an actor, they have probably few superiors. Amidst such privileges, I trust, I have not been altogether idle. And if you are curious to see the result of my cogitations, and to compare them with your own, you have now the opportunity. The paper in your hands, contains an account of much that I have heard and seen, with my own comments upon it.'

" Was there ever such a treasure, my love," said the old gentleman. She could think of no such treasure except, indeed, the aged vicar himself. It was not that she had the same instinctive and antiquarian attachment for the cushion with himself; but she had taught herself pretty much to love whatever he loved. Indeed, common views and objects for

fifty

fifty years leave small differences of taste in the subjects of them. Perhaps, with the exception of two habits of the good vicar, there was scarcely an act of his life to which she could not reconcile herself. The habits which I mean, were occasionally smoking a single pipe; and sometimes, though very rarely, preaching a borrowed sermon. The truth, as to these points, was, she could ill endure that a mouth, ordained to be the channel of his own kindness and wisdom, should be degraded into, either a mere conveyance of smoke, or of the thoughts of other people. As to other things, they were like the strings of two finely-tuned instruments is—touch the one, and the other vibrated. I have always been deeply interested in this aged couple. All the world are delighted to watch the young as they grow up together. To me it is not less delightful to see the old wear out together—to see two creatures of distinct tempers and passions by degrees melting into one—to see how

happy

happy those may be, who habitually prefer the happiness of another to their own—to see finally real love, like a flower blooming amidst ruins, surviving the vigor of the body, and all those attractions on which it is thought to depend. Some fanciful writer has imagined, that mankind fall from Heaven in pairs; and that, unless the right pair meet again after their descent, they can neither of them be happy. If this be true, I should certainly imagine that this venerable couple dropped from the skies together; at all events they will, I doubt not, together, ascend the skies. But as they will frequently appear in the course of this history, the reader may judge of all these things for himself. In the mean time, I proceed to another chapter.

CHAP.

CHAPTER III.

The old gentleman then having put both body and mind into the attitude of attention, and heard with laudable patience and forbearance a caution from his careful lady against hurting himself by reading too loud, read on as follows :

' As I said, Sir, I was now the cushion of a Catholic church, and I assure you that I soon felt all the benefit of my recent consecration and peculiar destiny. A good Catholic treats even his cushion with reverence. Indeed, I had some reason to suspect, that an old woman of the congregation considered me either as the relic of a Saint, or as the Saint himself suffering under some especial penance. For certain it is she often approached me with crosses and genuflections.—But, Sir, Popery possessed some more substantial and general claims upon my

my regard than those founded upon the honours it conferred on myself. When I looked around on the edifice into which I was introduced, I was at once awed and delighted. The vast Gothic arches, the solemn light, the general air of majesty —all inspired the most lofty ideas of the Being to whom the temple was dedicated. And here, Sir, as I am likely to say a few hard things of Popery presently, I wish, by way of set off, to remind you good Protestants, that you owe to Popery almost every thing that deserves to be called by the name of a Church. Popery is the religion of Cathedrals—Protestantism of houses — Dissenterism of barns. I have heard you, Sir, who ought, I am sure, to read nothing in vain, read very emphatically a brief for the repair of a Church originally built by Papists— which even, with the odd sixpence slipped in by yourself for the reputation of the parish, did not collect above ninepence. I have sometimes thought that, if

Protestantism

Protestantism had been the first faith of the country, and the present niggardly spirit as to public edifices had prevailed, you must all have been field preachers for want of a Church to preach in. But to return, Sir. I soon discovered that, after admiring the magnificence of Popery, my topics of admiration were soon exhausted. I no sooner heard parts of the Bible than I began to compare them with what I saw and heard around me. And I need not tell you, Sir, that the Bible and Popery do not very strictly harmonize. I saw an endless round of childish ceremonies—water said to cleanse from sin—unction that at once prepared the sinner for heaven—relics of the cross, which, put together, were twice as big as the cross itself could have been—figures of saints to which prayers were offered, said to have fallen from heaven, but carved, as I heard the clerk say, about fifty years since, out of the remnants of an old pew—images said to open

their eyes, to cure diseases, to send victory, and so on—all of which I, who was in the secret, knew to have been created by a neighbouring joiner. But all this, though bad enough, was not the worst. I saw the Priest hold up a piece of bread which he affirmed to be Christ, and all the people fell down and worshipped it. As to much that I heard, I have thought it an implicit duty to forget it as soon as possible. Exceptions indeed there were. But, in general, I heard little but certain maxims and histories, of no authority or use, which they called traditions. Sometimes these were exchanged for fabulous histories of the very Saints I have mentioned as manufactured by a neighbouring joiner. Sometimes also I heard of the duty of penance, of worshipping the Virgin, of burning and pinching men into orthodoxy, of confession to the Priest. As to this last duty, I observed, that one half of it was most rigidly performed, namely, that in which the confessionist

fessionist was to give an account of his own excellencies. I heard much also of absolution; and especially remember the man who bought at a high price from the Pope's nuncio absolution for three months in advance, from whatever sin he might commit; and, in virtue of his license, before the expiration of the patent, robbed this very nuncio of all he had pilfered by the sale of this and many other absolutions. I heard occasionally also from a neighbouring court, what was still more terrible—the crackling of faggots, and the groans of heretical victims. But, Sir, as I do not love finding fault, I will here stop, confessing however, that I sincerely partook in the joy expressed by the old Clerk, who, though he called himself for convenience a Papist, during this bloody reign, nevertheless was too conscious of his heresy not daily to expect suspension by one of his own ropes—when told, by the verger, that the Queen was dead. I love

Royalty,

Royalty, and do not mean to judge her as an individual. The religion of her Royal Father was certainly not such as to recommend his mode of faith to her. Persecution also was the fashion of the day. Moreover, she was a woman of weak understanding in the hands of crafty Priests. In short, I heartily hope that her Majesty had some better excuses to offer than you zealous Protestants have discovered. But, as I said, I rejoiced she was gone, and unfeignedly hoped Popery would be buried in the grave with her.'

Here the venerable reader laid down the manuscript; and she, whose oracle he was, laid down her work to listen to his observations upon it. He took off his spectacles, that, not looking outwards, he might, as it were, see inwards the better, took snuff twice, placed his right hand upon the Bible which lay on his table, as if afraid, in his argument, of letting it go—and thus began.

"I

" I think, my dear," he said, " it is difficult to speak too ill of Popery as a religion."

" I should think it is, my love," she answered.

" It was at once," he added, " superstitious, formal, cold, and cruel. Above all, it did not teach men to fix their hopes and affections upon that Saviour who has been, my love, all our hope for near fifty years." The mention of these fifty years insured her consent to any proposition of the speaker.

" And, then," said he, " the errors of the Church were perpetuated by their own practices. This blessed book," and he raised his hand, and reverently brought it down again upon the sacred volume as he spoke, " this blessed book, which would have corrected the evil, was kept out of sight. They were sick, and would not let the physician prescribe for them."

" That my dear," said the old lady, whose

whose thoughts were instantly turned by the word 'physician' to a little argument between them the day before, on the subject of a complaint of his own, "that, my dear, is the fault of some better men than themselves."

"Now," added he, pretending not to notice her remark, "a consequence of this was, that the disease continually gained ground." She, still applying the remark nearer home, fetched a deep sigh. "Hence," he added "an evil once introduced into the system was never got rid of. Still, while I condemn the religion, I cannot but love many of the professors of it. There are no authors I read with greater delight, as you know, than Pascal and Fenelon. The one is all reason, and the other all love."

"How happened it, my dear," she asked, "that such men as these never discovered the defects of their religion?"

"They never suffered themselves," he answered,

answered, " to look after their defects. Their unbounded reverence for the Priest did not permit them to use their own judgment in opposition to his." Her own unbounded reverence for one particular Priest made this answer peculiarly intelligible and satisfactory to her. He added, " I feel disposed to condemn the temper of the present age as it respects Popery in two points. In one party, there is too little dislike of the religion. In the other, too little charity for some of those who hold it. I acknowledge, for instance, that Popery has some things in it not likely to inspire loyalty for a Protestant sovereign, or patriotism to a heretic country. But still I believe there are many Papists both loyal and patriotic. Their very refusal to take our oaths proves that they respect an oath. Their refusal to part with any tittle of their own faith for a desirable end, promises, I think, that they will not maintain that faith by wrong means."

" Would

" Would you, then," she asked, " have voted for Catholic emancipation ?"

" The country," he answered, " has nothing either to hope or fear from my vote. And in this instance, as in all others, I rejoice that she has wiser counsellors. But this I will say to you," and smiling, as if at an old friend, " to my cushion here, who has listened to all my poor sayings, with extraordinary patience, for above half a century,—that, whilst I like the concessions, I tremble at the ground on which the Catholics ask them. They claim them as a right; and I could grant them only as a favour. Admit them to be a right, and the Catholics have the same right to ask for a Popish King and Church. Consider them as a favour, and then we may stop at the point of danger. And sure I am, my love, I should not be anxious to discover that point too soon. Governments may easily be too sharp-sighted upon such points. I desire to see the

edifice of our constitution last as long as the rocks by which we are surrounded; and, for this purpose, I would inscribe on its walls the sacred name of that 'Charity' which '*never faileth.*'"

"But, my dear, do you not think the character of Popery improved?"

"Not so much as I had hoped. There is, however, one circumstance which promises a great improvement in our own country—I mean the universal diffusion of the Bible. It is like letting in light upon the owls and bats. Popery has, perhaps, too much affinity with the corruption of our nature to die a natural death, but, I begin to hope, it may be suffocated by the Bible."

"Suppose, my love," said the old lady, who loved a practical conclusion to all arguments, "we now read our own chapter and go to bed."—They did read their chapter, and rose from it, as I have heard them say, they always did, loving God and one another even better than they did before.

CHAPTER IV.

THE next morning our aged minister rose early, and perhaps the reader may think, immediately resumed his seat with the darling manuscript in his hand. But no. It was a rule with him always to follow up his morning petitions to his Father in Heaven by resuming the study of that blessed book with which he had closed the day. After this he called together his small circle of grey-headed servants to join him in a devout application for blessings upon the family and the world. Then he breakfasted. Then, chiefly by devout reading, he laid up materials for the sermon of the next Sunday. Then he visited, perhaps, some cottage in his village, taught the ignorant, rebuked the careless, or bound up the wounds of the broken hearted; and taught them, without appealing to his own case,

though no one who saw him could help making the application, how '*happy* is the people who have the Lord for their God.'—I will not say, however, that he did not shorten some of his other employments, and particularly a little argument with a farmer about the exact amount of his tithes, to return to the manuscript. At length the venerable couple seated themselves, much in the same form as before, and he began to read.

'The Clerk, Sir, had no sooner shaken hands with the Verger, and both with the Beadle, than they all hobbled to the belfry, seized, as by a sort of impulse, all the ropes, and shook with the notes of acclamation every stone in the steeple. I am willing to hope it was, not so much because they had lost the old Queen, as because they had got a new one. However that might be, 'all the Churches' followed our example; and such was the noise, that, if I may be allowed so to speak, although the lash of persecution

was

was withdrawn, it could not be said ' the Churches had *rest* in those days.'—It was a sort of general jubilee. The ceremony of a coronation was almost superfluous, for the Queen was already enthroned in the hearts of the people; I am sure it was next to a miracle, what with bonfires and fireworks, that the people, in their zeal for Church and Queen, did not fire all the churches in the country, and burn the Queen in her bed.—And now, Sir, let me tell you of my good fortune. The Queen herself, with her Court, came to that very Church of which I had the honour to be the Cushion, to give thanks for the rescue of herself and country. I believe such a Te Deum was scarcely ever sung. Gratitude, love, loyalty, ' bowed the heart of the people as the heart of one man.'' " O," said our old divine, " how I should have rejoiced to have been there!" " I rejoice, my love," said the old lady, who saw, at a glance, that he could not have been there and

here

here too, "I can truly say, that you were not there." He resumed his reading.—

'I will not detain you, Sir, with minutely stating the occurrences of the day. The Queen, I think, must have learned two lessons—to value the love of her people—and to feel how strong a title, and how sure a way to that love, are supplied by the profession and maintenance of true religion. I have seen enough to convince me, that the people of this country, though loyally blind, for a time, to the faults of their King, yet never love even a King long if he does not deserve to be loved.—I now go on to tell you about the changes which soon took place.—The holy water, and tapers, and oil all vanished; and, never hearing any thing of them in the Bible, I was glad they were gone. I was pleased, however, to see that there was no impatience to get rid of old things, if either good in themselves, or, if a good reason could

could be found for keeping them. Some of the finery, indeed, was removed from the church, and I myself was even stripped of some mock jewellery originally worked into my corners,—but, I declare, that I think we both looked the better for it. I observed, also, that the little confession boxes were nailed up, which, by the bye, deprived me of a source of daily amusement, and of much information given by Confessionists about the faults of their neighbours.—In the Liturgy, though many alterations were made, the same dislike of unnecessary change was observable. They prayed no longer, indeed, either to the Virgin or to the Saints. But they seemed rejoiced to continue the worship of God himself in the language of their fathers. Prayers, you know, Sir, many of them inherited from almost the first Christians, could not spoil merely by passing through the hands of the Pope.—But I was chiefly struck with the change in the doctrine

of

of the preachers. Before, the preaching was rare, and I used chiefly to hear of the merits of the Saints, the happiness of those who bought with money an interest in those merits—of works of supererogation, of purgatory, or a state in which, let a man live and die as he would, he might after death be purged from his corruption and fitted for Heaven. I do not say I heard nothing more like the Bible than this. Some indifferent Papists were, in my judgment, better Christians. But I mean to say, that, thus, preached the mass of the clergy; and, thus, did I, and the multitude below me understand them.—Now, however, Sir, I perceived, as I said, a great change; and, that I may not detain you too long, I will only state the three doctrines which, as by a sort of resurrection, started up from the grave of Popery, and appeared to all the city. The Reformers taught that man was a fallen creature—that he could be acquitted before God only

only through a reliance in Christ,—and, lastly, that God by his Holy Spirit could alone give him a new heart, and fit him for the kingdom of Heaven. These, Sir, are your own doctrines, and I the rather state them to you, because I know you will rejoice to find that you are preaching those doctrines proclaimed by your ancestors under the axe of the executioner.' —This was almost too much for our good Vicar. If there was a wish of his heart, it was to know that his doctrines were cast in the mould of the Reformation. A tear rolled down his manly cheek,—but, I fancy, it was not a tear of grief—for I heard him, at the conclusion of this paragraph, emphatically say,—" Thank God!"—and she who felt all his mercies to be her own—said, " Amen !"

He read on. ' The divines of those days,' continued the manuscript, ' differed considerably from some good men now. And, if you will not think me tedious, I will state the nature of *this*

difference. Your ancestors, then, Sir, dwelt more on those important doctrines in which all agreed, and less on those minuter points on which some of them differed.—They preached less controversially. They took for granted that the principles of the Bible would be the principles of their hearers. They rather asserted the doctrines than defended them; and employed themselves chiefly in shewing what sort of men these doctrines ought to make. Those Homilies, Sir, of which I have heard you read some to your flock, are an excellent sample of the divinity of the day of their birth. When I hear them I almost fancy some of my first friends risen from their graves again. There may be less head in them than in the mere systematic divinity of your day; but there is more heart, more of the careless beauty of Scripture, more of 'brave neglect' which characterises the noble enthusiasm of Saints and Martyrs. —But I perceive that I am beginning to indulge

indulge in that garrulity so general with the old in praising old times, and therefore I will say no more on this subject.' —" I wish it had said as much again on the subject," said the old gentleman.— " I wish it had," echoed his lady,— " and I should say of its garrulity what you remember our good old King (God bless him!) said to a writer who apologized for having written *too much*,—' I should have thought so too, Sir, if you had not written so well.'" The Vicar was as much pleased with this compliment to his Cushion as if it had been to himself; and, though he had heard the story at least a hundred times, thought he had never heard it so well applied before.—He read on.—

' Things, however, were too good to last. I soon perceived, even at church, some persons who treated all ceremonies and forms with a sort of suspicion. They seemed to expect Popery to start from behind them. At length the friends of the

the Establishment began to notice the subject in their sermons—to decry rashness and enthusiasm—to speak of a new discipline fished up from the lake of Geneva—to contend that the opposite extreme from Popery was as bad as Popery itself. I have heard Hooker himself—' (" Hooker !" said the old gentleman, and almost leapt from his seat) ' denounce the rising spirit of disaffection to Church and State,—which, ' though now (he said) a mere cloud in the horizon, would soon darken the face of the heavens.' But he prophesied in vain. The tumult increased. And, I grieve to say, that the effect of this spirit of disaffection upon the staunch churchmen was not such as to allay the heat. Disgusted with the rash foes to Popery, they somewhat lessened their hostility to that religion. Elizabeth herself began to regard the two extremes of Puritanism and Popery with equal dislike.—Her successor, James, scarcely hated Popery.—And Charles the First, perhaps,

perhaps, preferred it.'—At this sentence our venerable divine sighed, and, for a moment, felt displeased with his velvet memorialist. If he had a prejudice in the world it was in favour of the first Charles. It arose partly from his love of royalty,—partly from his father's having given him, though he had carefully shut up the rest of Hume from him, when a boy, the few exquisite pages in which he records the death of the King,—partly from a slight infusion of Scotch blood in his veins,—partly from the virtues of the life of Charles and the terrors of his death, which have invested him with a species of martyrdom in the eyes of Englishmen. I have sometimes suspected also that an exquisite portrait of Charles, by Vandyke, which had descended in the old gentleman's family, and always hung in his study, had a little to do with this feeling. So ample a forehead, so meek a smile, so pensive an eye, could not surely belong to a bad man.—

But,

But, whatever might be the source of his prejudice, certain it is, that he felt it. When, therefore, he came to this sentence, he stopped, shut the manuscript, took a few turns in the room, looked at his picture, and, at length, gravely said,—"I do not like to serve our kings like those of Egypt, and bring them to judgment after their death. That poor Scotch minister had a kinder heart, who, though he loathed Queen Mary living, said, when his brethren, after her death, were emptying the vials of their hatred upon her,—'Nay, bury her, for she is a King's daughter.' The temptations of Kings excuse many of their faults in my eyes."

"You and I, my love," said his wife, "have often thanked God that our temptations were so few.—But had Charles any great faults?"

"One of the greatest," he replied, "was, perhaps, that of so surrounding his person with dissolute men, that, in the

the hour of his calamity, few good ones dared to trust him.—But his misfortunes, I think, were greater than his faults."—

" What misfortunes," she asked, " do you chiefly mean?"

" He was the heir, of arbitrary principles at a time when even the lightest yoke would scarcely be borne. He wished to govern, after the model of his ancestors, a people who would not be governed at all.—Moreover, he had the misfortune of not knowing how to concede with a good grace,—but suffered his enemies to extort by force what he should have granted as a favour.—I am surprised men are not disposed more to pity and love, than to condemn him."—

" *You*, my dear," she said, " love every body."

" Seventy years acquaintance with myself," he answered, " has taught me that it becomes us not anxiously to search out each others nakedness,—but rather to approach the faults of others backwards, and throw the mantle over them."

" I think, my dear," she said, " the picture seems to cast an eye of reproach upon that page of the manuscript."—

" I think it does," he answered, and, so perhaps, we had better turn to another."—They accordingly did, and read as follows.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER V.

'As I have already hinted at the spirit of the Church, and of the Enemies of the Church in the days just after Queen Elizabeth, I will now pass them over and hasten forward to a period most important to myself and to the nation.—One morning, almost before sun-rise, I saw a band of soldiers enter the church. They were strange-looking men, with hair cut short and rounded,—dealt much in scriptural language, often metaphorically, and as often inaccurately used. They frequently denounced Church and King. On a sudden I was confounded to hear a man, who looked like a serjeant, give the word, and the band flew to work. In a moment they broke down the rails of the altar, beheaded a fine Magdalen, put the silver chalice and candlesticks into their pockets, bayonet-

ted

ted a surplice, fastened the vicar's band upon a great black dog which had followed them into the church, dashed the Common Prayer Book through a fine painted window,—and at last mounted, —I tremble while I tell it,—the pulpit, and the serjeant himself, with one end of his halbert cut away my lace and tassels, and with the other ran me through the bowels.' "True I declare, my dear," said the old gentleman, "for see here the two holes made by the sacrilegious instrument,—holes of which you know how perplexed I have often been to discover the origin."—"Holes," she replied, "which I darned for the third time so carefully last Candlemas." "Holes," said he, "which I always deemed the disgrace of the establishment, but which henceforward I shall charge upon their Puritan authors." In short, fifty years had associated so many circumstances with these holes in the Cushion, that it was a considerable time before they could get back

to

to the Cushion itself. At length, however, he read on.—' I need not say, Sir, that this rough treatment gave me no prejudice in favour of the new usurpers in Church and State. Nor, indeed, can I, to this moment, comprehend how, either beheading the King, or perforating a Cushion, could have any necessary connection with the Reformation of Religion. But still, Sir, indiscriminate censure of the Puritans would be highly unjust. The first of the race were considerably the best. They were men who had little, perhaps, to condemn in them, except a superstitious alarm at Popery. Their doctrines were in general pure,—their practice correct; and some of them were not merely among the best Christians, but the finest gentlemen of the day. Afterwards, when religion became a step to court favour,—when the motto of the day was the " praise of God in our mouth, and a two-edged sword in our hand,"—when insurrection against established

blished authority was placed among the virtues,—when learning was considered as a dead weight round the neck of religion, and no man was deemed fit to mount a pulpit who could not first make one,—when the fine arts and all other sources of harmless refreshment were proscribed,—then, indeed, those apostles of this new system, who gained the name of Puritans, deserved it, to say the least, as little as any of their contemporaries. The Royalists, though many of them without religion, generally retained the form. Many of the Puritans had neither form nor religion.'—" Is not that a little harsh, my love," said the old lady. " It may be so," answered he. " But, to be sure, the times were truly awful. In common times men sin against their principles, and then one hopes their principles may mend them. But these men rebelled upon principle, — shed royal blood for conscience sake. What, therefore, could mend them?"—" *You*," she replied,

replied, " if they had heard your last sermon on peace of conscience." How far the Vicar agreed with his lady, it is impossible to say, as he said nothing himself, but read on.

' I made one constant remark—that a fast day was generally succeeded by some new crime against Church or King. If I heard a fast sermon on Wednesday, I expected to hear the pew-openers talk of an execution on Thursday.' " I cannot help thinking," said the old gentleman, " that their scheme of religion spoiled their tempers. I do indeed heartily commend their abstinence from vicious or worldly amusements. But surely, cheerfulness is not a crime. That God who is ' Our Father,' must love to see his creatures happy. If, then, instead of perpetual fasting, and ' will worship,' they had gone abroad among the glories of nature,—if even they had refreshed their spirits by a commerce with science and art, I think, by the mercy of God, they

they would have become happier themselves, and therefore less jealous of the happiness of others. They would have shaken off the dew of their own comforts on all around them." Whilst he said this, his lady, as if to illustrate his argument, was straining her eyes and fingers to release a fly, which had audaciously leapt into the cream pot. She was so happy herself, she would not willingly suffer even a fly to be miserable. He began once more to read.

'As, Sir, I once had the honour of seeing a Queen at church, so now I had my curiosity gratified by a sight of the Protector. He had a peculiar countenance, and might perhaps have sat with equal propriety for the portrait of an enthusiast, or an hypocrite.' "Is not that impossible?" asked the old lady. "Not at all," replied the Vicar. "Men often deceive others till they learn to deceive themselves."

"But let us proceed—"

'He

'He was evidently in a state of much agitation—wore a sort of armour under his coat, seemed to look at every man as an enemy, and refused in common with all his followers to say '*Our Father*, &c. &c.' because, I suppose, they felt themselves anything but brethren. Nothing seemed to give him any satisfaction, till the preacher said, that 'Men once in a state of grace could never fall away.' Then the Protector looked up and smiled, as much as to say, 'I have no doubt I once was in that state.'"

"Surely," said the old lady, "either he was mistaken, or the doctrine is false."

Now, of all things in the world, our good Vicar disliked peremptory decisions upon important subjects. He did not pretend to see quite as far and as clearly as some of his neighbours. Indeed, he thought the Bible itself not quite so decided about Calvinism and Arminianism, as many of the readers of the Bible would pretend, and used to say, "I think half the

the Bible would have suited Calvin or Arminius much better than the whole." A great text with him was, " The secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children, that we may do them." And a favourite question to himself, when any difficulties were beginning to perplex him, was, "What is that to thee, follow thou me." In obedience to which, his custom was, when any one started a controverted topic which he had no hopes of settling, to jump up, as well as he could at seventy-five, and to ' follow' his master in some work of love or usefulness.

I heard him once say to a good man, but rather an anxious disputant, " Forgive me, my dear friend—but I cannot spend my time in examining these thorns upon the hill of Zion, when I am mercifully permitted to gather its flowers.—Come, and let us look together at the goodly proportions, the majesty, the splendor of the temple, and listen to

the promises of its mercy seat—and leave others to pluck up the few weeds which have sprung up in its Courts."

If this was an error, it was so happy an error for himself and his parish, that it would have been great inhumanity to have taught him better. When his Lady started the above-named dilemma, then, although he felt that certain strong partizans might have been inconvenienced by its horns, he took his usual jump, and simply said—"Whatever may be thought of the doctrine, there can be no doubt, that Cromwell made a very bad use of it. But I heartily wish we, none of us, abused even better doctrines. I am not at all sure, for instance, that it is not an abuse of the doctrine of divine mercy that has kept me at home to-day, when I should have called on old Dame Wilkins."

"What, my dear," said she, "do you think the best means of checking in oneself the abuse of good doctrines?"

"Prayer to God," he answered, "in the first instance—next to that, good practice. In general, our lives ruin our doctrines. And so, my dear, let us go to Mary Wilkins directly." Her bonnet was soon on, and they hobbled down the village almost as fast as if their house had been on fire. Mary Wilkins was a poor, good old woman, to whom the Vicar's visit, three times a week, had become almost as necessary as her tea or snuff. It was now two hours beyond the time he usually came; and, had she been awake, she would really have been pained by the delay. But, happily, she had fallen into a profound sleep, and when he put his foot on the threshold, and in his old-fashioned way said, "Peace be with you," she was just awaking. This comforted our good old man; and, as he well knew where all comfort comes from, he thanked God in his heart even for this.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VI.

The venerable couple had seated themselves to tea,—the lady, in spight of her lord's decided preference for green, had dexterously slipped in, for the sake of his nerves, an undue proportion of black, the old sofa was wheeled round, the fire stirred, Shock had leapt up into a vacant chair, the candles were trimmed, and, in short, all was prepared for the resumption of his reading between every cup and mouthful, when a neighbour entered the room. He was an erect sort of personage, something like the pictures one occasionally sees of a cavalier; a resemblance of which, perhaps, he was proud, as he was said to plead a distant relationship to the Stuarts themselves. At all events, he was an enthusiastic lover of the family; more than equalling our Vicar in his attachment to the first

Charles, and far transcending him, which, indeed, was a matter of no difficulty, in his attachment to the second. The old gentleman, who was now ten times more occupied with his Cushion than ever, at once broke ground upon his favourite topic, told his visitor all the story,—the substance of what he had read, the exact quantity he had read, and, finally, begged to know if he was disposed to partake, first of some tea, and then of the richer feast prepared for him in the precious memoir. The visitor, as the memoir had reached the precise period which he deemed most worthy of notice, and of which, indeed, he himself, but for an unaccountable habit of bad spelling, had often conceived a wish to write the history,—at once consented. Behold, then, the due preliminaries of bread and butter being settled, the three seated to their interesting employment; and the old gentleman as happy as a King, I mean as a good King, begin to read.

'I confess that, neither what I saw of the

the Protector at church, or heard of him from my loquacious friends, the Sexton and Clerk, was calculated to destroy the remembrance of my personal indignities, or to conciliate my esteem for the author of them. He was a person in whom, unhappily, great talents and great vices met together,—a 'bold bad man.'"

"Very just, I am sure," said the Visitor, and took off his other glove, which before, as if doubtful about staying, he had kept in his hand.

"*Just*, I fear it is," said the charitable Vicar; "but, let us hope, full strong. I must hope that he did not mean to be as wicked as he seems. He was, after all, an enthusiast; and, in such men, the head is generally the dupe of the heart." The Visitor thought, as many other people will think, the Vicar's charity much misplaced; but he let him read on.

'At length, Sir, to my astonishment, I heard, in a whisper, (for in those days none spoke louder about state affairs) from

from the Reader to the Clerk, that the Protector had suddenly sickened, either of a bad conscience, or of a tertian ague, and, in spight of the prophecies of some pseudo religious quacks about him, had died. And I cannot say but that, if I had thought him better prepared for so awful a change, I should have cordially joined in the general rejoicing. It was forcibly said of him, that 'he was one of those men who, whenever they die, die for the good of their country.'"

"That," said the Vicar drily, "must depend on the character of his successor."

Here the Visitor began to chafe a little; but the old gentleman had so much of what is called *bonhommie* about him, and said his hardest things so very softly, that it was impossible to be really angry with him. He read again.

'I pass over the momentary reign of his son, who, being fitter for a country gentleman than a sovereign, had the good

good fortune himself to make the discovery, and was quite as ready to exchange his sceptre for a pitchfork, as the nation to require the exchange.—I pass on, then, at once, to the days of Charles II. And here, Sir, I confess, that although I had seen two great national changes, I was not prepared for what followed. The people were naturally very glad to see the King back. But how did they testify their joy? By the most extravagant excesses,—as if they wanted a King, merely for the illustrious privilege of breaking every law of God and man. If they had known that particular monarch better, they would have known, that there was only one man in the nation to whom he was disposed to grant this plenary indulgence.'

"Who was that?" asked the old lady. Neither the Visitor nor the Vicar thought fit to reply,—though, I suspect, they had the most opposite answer upon their lips.—The latter proceeded to read.

'The

'The Court took the lead in profligacy, and the lower orders soon followed. Even the Church was infected. The nation, a month since, to all appearance, a living mass of enthusiasm, was suddenly transmuted into a nation of rioters. The mob, who had scarcely ceased to cry "Hosannah!" now cried, "Crucify him!" Excessive heat was chased, as it were, and expelled by excessive cold. I can fancy nothing like it.'—

"Except," said the Vicar, whom his wife esteemed something of a wag, "a hail storm in the dog days." He then proceeded to read.

'You can conceive nothing more changed than the sermons. For a long time I had been of little service in the church; for most of the Commonwealth preachers had a notion that words once impressed upon paper lost all their efficacy,—that, what a man conceived in his study, when he had time to pray and read, was necessarily bad; and what he conceived

conceived in the pulpit, where he had time for neither, was necessarily good. So that my only function, during this disastrous period, was to endure the lusty thumps of puritannical fists; the weight of which, I must say, more than compensated for every other subduction of labour.—Indeed, they beat me as thoroughly as they could have done had they known my antipathy to the beaters.

'At length, however, the Restoration, with some other good things, brought back written sermons. The character of the new sermons, however, I confess, did not please me. The resolution apparently taken by the Royalists was, first, to do all that the Republicans had left undone; and, secondly, to leave undone all they had done. Now, if no particle of truth had mixed up with the Puritan errors, this rule would have been wise. But as their system included a remarkable mixture of truth and error, nothing could be more mischievous.'

"It was," said the Vicar, "inflicting upon religion something like the Roman punishment of tying a man to an ape, and casting both together into the Tiber."

The Visitor, whom I shall hereafter call the Cavalier, since he had the look and the mind of one, liked neither the remark nor the simile, both of which he deemed too honorable to Puritanism—and taking the glove again from his pocket, drew it on. Something also he said gruffly and indistinctly; but the Vicar, not liking the tone in which he spoke, thought even his own voice pleasanter than his, and therefore began to read again.

'Henceforward, Sir, we heard little more of Christ, and faith, and conversion; for which words were substituted Socrates, reason, and moderation; as if truth and devotion were opposed to good sense and sobriety. I am persuaded, a good Heathen coming to Church, might, except

except indeed on the festivals, have often concluded himself in his own temple. True doctrine was out of fashion with the nation, and good morals unpalatable to the King.'

" What King could that be?" said the old lady; one of whose little frailties was to ask unlucky questions?"

" I am quite sure," said the Vicar, whose peculiar art it was to evade these questions—" it was not George the Third."

" It must be Louis the XIVth," said the Visitor.

" Perhaps," replied the Vicar, " if we read on, we shall hear." And accordingly he read on.

'I have been much struck, Sir, in my long life, with one circumstance, that, whenever the Church of Christ for a long time had rest, through any particular event, the great mysteries of the gospel became unpopular. Whenever the monarch was either arbitrary or licentious, certain

certain features of Popery began to discover themselves in the national religion. And so it was now. Pomp grew, and devotion languished. Violent assaults were made on the sanctity of the Sabbath. The saints did not indeed again take possession of the vacant niches, nor the Pope come over to be crowned—transubstantiation and purgatory were also abjured—but, what may be called the genius of Popery, I mean—the form without the spirit of religion, presided in the pulpit, and at the altar, almost as much as ever. It was a more subtle Popery—Popery in a mask—Popery, like an Italian assassin, doing its work, without shewing its face.

'But, Sir, I had not much leisure to speculate upon the state of things in the Establishment; for, one Wednesday evening, on which day, after morning prayers, I had always been allowed to be at rest in my box, I found myself suddenly in the gripe of a new rector of the parish,

parish, who, casting me, somewhat contemptuously, my stabbed side uppermost, on the vestry table (if the old Vicar had worn a sword, I am sure he would have then laid his hand upon the hilt of it), in a loud tone, said to the circle of eager vestrymen around him, 'There, gentlemen, judge for yourselves—is such a cushion worthy of such a Church?' 'Or,' said an upholsterer, who hoped to be called upon to supply a new cushion, 'of such a Clergyman?' 'Surely,' observed a laceman, 'it would do well enough with new lace and tassels.' 'Certainly,' said a dealer in tints and dyes, 'if it were only cleaned and dyed'—But, as there chanced to be more than one of a trade in the vestry—as a mere repair would not answer the upholsterer's purpose, nor new lace the dyer's, it was determined to make a grace of a necessity, and generously to comply with the Clergyman's wish. My dismissal was accordingly agreed upon, noted, and signed

signed in the vestry book; and an order given for another. I accordingly became the perquisite of the pew-opener; and will now proceed to tell you what use he made of his new possession.'

"If it had been hanged, drawn, and quartered," said the now-bursting Visitor, "it was far too happy a fate for it. Is not the memoir down-right Puritanism and treason, from beginning to end?"

"If it was, Sir," said the Vicar calmly, "it should be cut into thread-papers to-morrow. But, on the contrary, it has, personal reasons—see there, Sir, (pointing to the lacerated side of the Cushion), for detesting the Puritans—

'Look, in this place, ran Casca's dagger through,
'See what a rent the envious Casca made.'

"And, as for loyalty, why, Sir, I hope I may venture to say, that I am a loyal man. There hangs a King (pointing to his darling picture), to save whose head I would willingly have laid my own on the

the block." The old Lady absolutely groaned out at the terrible vision her lord had conjured up—" but, I must say, that, by a somewhat unequal distribution, he seems to have had all the virtue of the family. It was just like the old peach tree in the garden, my love, where, as you well know, all the sap has run to one branch. Of what, Sir, in Charles II." continued he, " can we speak favourably? Of his religion?" "No—" said the Visitor, who was at the bottom a conscientious man. " Of his morals?"—" No." " Of his politics?"—" No." " Of his good old English spirit?"—" No." " Well, then, since we can say nothing good of him, we had better" added the kind old Gentleman, " say nothing at all. If, Sir, I had caught him sleeping in the cave of Makkedah, I would not have touched even the skirt of his garment, but I would have gently jogged his Majesty, when thus slumbering over the interests of his country, and

have

have said to him—' Sire, the Crown of England will be a Crown of thorns to any man who wears it without deserving it. Poetical compacts vanish away, but the title of a good King is registered in Heaven, and stamped on the hearts of his people."

" Perhaps, my love," said the old lady, " if any one had said this to him, he would have been reclaimed."

" Let us hope so," said her lord, " and just touch for a moment on another topic noticed in the Memoir. Did you not notice the hints given there of a revival of Popery?"

" To be sure,—and that it always appeared when any other form or system of religion disappeared."

" Like rats," said the Vicar, who it seems had got up in a humour for similies, " like rats in an empty house."

" Sir," said the Visitor, who combined an absolute antipathy for Popery with a profound respect for a kind of Protestantism

tantism not much unlike it, " I can see nothing like Popery in the religion of the days of Charles the Second."

" Now, for my part," answered the Vicar, " I see something like it in the religion of all days. Popery seems to me the religion of human nature. It is the weed which both springs up wherever the soil is uncultivated, and endeavours to choke whatever is sown. The Pope is a mere man, who endeavours to add temporal to spiritual power, and to get both into his own hands. People have talked of Popes Wesley, and Whitfield and they, with many others, are proofs, perhaps, that you may have Popes without tiaras."

" And what is Popery ?" asked the old lady.

" The religion of forms," answered the Vicar, " a sort of pantomime, where much was to be done by dumb shew."

" But," asked the Visitor, who knowing the Vicar's strict adherence to the rites

rites of his own Church, and his almost superstitious reverence for it, thought he had here caught him tripping, "do you, then, despise forms?"

"Far from it," replied the Vicar, "I never yet saw, nor expect to see, religion survive their destruction. But, because I cannot walk without my old stick, I do not mistake it for my legs,—nor, because I cannot preach without my cushion here, and do perhaps think all my sermons somewhat the better for it, do I yet mistake it for a sermon."

"If you had, my love," said his lady, who deemed the bare comparison of the best of sermons to a cushion little short of impiety, "you would make a greater mistake than any you ever made in your life." And, as the Visitor had not always found the said sermons quite as composing and comfortable as the image would imply, he heartily assented to this declaration.

"Upon the whole," said the Vicar, "I seem,

seem, as I said, to see Popery enter whenever the door is not barred by the treble bolt of a humble, practical, devout spirit. I see it in the broad-brimmed hat of a Quaker, in the smooth silk hat of a Methodist, in the cant language of some other sectaries; and, finally, I see it sometimes where I would least of all wish to see it, at the font and the altar of our own truly spiritual Church."

"In what cases?" asked the Visitor.

"When," replied the old Gentleman, "the priests or the people imagine that the mere rite supersedes real vital religion in the heart of the worshipper."

"I fear," said the Visitor, "I have something of Popery running in my own veins."

"That very fear," said the Vicar, "will, by the divine blessing, carry off the disease." And then he caught him tenderly by the hand. "Do not think," said he, "that I led intentionally the conversation to this issue; but, as Providence has conducted

ducted us to this point, let us make the best use of your circumstances. I do think, you have named your chief fault. The correctness of your life, your zeal for the Church, your integrity, your benevolence, have long made me love you, and feel ashamed of myself—and I have often said, but 'One thing lackest thou yet,' seek, dear Sir, to add the spirit to the form of religion—bring fire to your altar—put the soul into the act—and then, I shall be as inferior to you in devotion, as I have long been in every thing else. I am your Shepherd, Sir, but the sheep often knows his way to the best pastures better than his Shepherd. Happy, most happy shall I be, to tread in your steps."

There was something in this honest, simple, pastoral address of the good Vicar, that sunk to the very heart of his Visitor. I saw him lift his handkerchief to his face as if to weep—but, as the old Lady at almost the same moment

ment observed, " how much these wood fires affect the eyes;" and he and the Vicar assented to it—this might possibly be the cause. I heard him, however, a few moments afterwards, when they were out of the room, with eyes full of tears, but yet lifted up with a sort of holy confidence to God, exclaim, " The true worshipper shall worship thee in spirit and in truth."

The same Gentleman died two years afterwards, and this codicil was found to his will—" I leave to the Vicar of ——— in ———, my Baskett's Bible and Prayer Book, as a testimony of gratitude for his having first taught me to use them both as I ought." The old Vicar keeps them in a choice corner of his library; and his Lady, in gentle disobedience to his orders, will, when he is absent, tell the story, and look a little proud of her husband. This, however, the less signifies, as I am quite sure he is not proud of himself.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VII.

The Vicar, however, though not proud of himself, was proud of his cushion, and therefore felt too much anxiety to know its history, after its expulsion from the establishment, not to seat himself to his memoir as early as he conscientiously could. Having entered on his task, he read as follows—

'I confess, Sir, such is the love of novelty, and so heartily tired was I of the cold-blooded divines of the days of Charles and James, that I was not very sorry to find the hour of my dismissal arrived. As I traversed the streets under the arms of one of the pew-openers, I indulged in many flattering visions as to my future life. Who could say—Cromwell had risen to the throne, and why should not I become the cushion of the Crown itself—get into Parliament, or carry the mace of the speaker—or, if unable

able to reach those honors with which I was acquainted, attain to some unknown dignities?' No one, I believe, expects to be injured by a change of circumstances. But, Sir, imagine my horror, in the midst of these fairy dreams, to be plumped down on the counter of a shop, adorned without by the sign of the three golden balls, and which I soon found to be the shop of a pawnbroker. He received me, most carefully examined me, and having scrupulously pointed out those blemishes with which, alas, the vender was too familiar, bought me for ten shillings. Then, having affixed to me a ticket, marked one pound, and so situated as exactly to conceal the mutilated part, he exalted me, among many other pieces of reduced finery, to the windows. Here, although my ancient splendour was somewhat in eclipse, enough remained to attract the eye of many a passenger. Multitudes eyed, felt, and measured me, but all thought me too dear. But for this circ-

circumstance,

cumstance I was once on the brink of being translated to a Jewish synagogue. Once, had I been an inch larger, the dowager of a baronet would have bought me for a lap-dog. Once, the manager of a country theatre coveted me (for these gentlemen are apt to think little of breaking a commandment), for the council scene in Cato. At length, an elder of a dissenting congregation, having been delegated by his brethren to the important office of introducing a cushion into a pulpit, hitherto unpolluted by such velvet vanities, took courage, put me into a Hackney coach, and laid me in triumph, once more upon a vestry table.

'I soon found where I was. Indeed, the days of the Protector had both given me a taste of my new friends, and left me, I fear, notwithstanding the real worth, piety, and talents of very many of them, with some little prejudice against them. But, however, as it is the duty of Cushions as well as men to be contented, I endeavoured to reconcile

reconcile myself to my new situation. But, indeed, Sir, this was not easy. To past, were added new injuries. Not only did I carry about me some ancient testimonies of Puritanical irreverence for Cushions; but I found every day, that the general contempt for forms extended itself to every thing connected with the exterior of public worship. As I once said, that even the Cushion of a Catholic was venerable in his eyes; so, if you can believe me, it seemed almost a matter of indifference to my new proprietors, whether I was trampled or preached upon.'

" My dear," said the Vicar, quickened to the remark, perhaps, by his almost superstitious reverence for the Cushion itself, " I venture to say this was wrong. Those who insult the forms of religion, are in imminent peril of learning to despise religion itself. A man who laughed at my surplice, would soon laugh at me." The old Lady, as the surplice happened to be the work of her own hands, was

marvellously sensible of the force of this illustration, and almost wondered that a world should survive in which men were found to laugh at either. The old Gentleman proceeded to read—

'When I arrived, Sir, the elders of the Church happened to be assembled to sit in judgment upon the character of their minister, against whom, I found, capital misdemeanors were alleged. He was charged with preaching a written sermon—with wishing for a service on Christmas-day—with prefacing a sermon with the Lord's Prayer—with suggesting the propriety of kneeling in prayer.—From the tone of authority assumed by the judges, I soon discovered that they, and not he, were the real ministers of the Chapel. He was a sort of organ, of which they were to change the barrel, fill the pipes, and manage the keys at their pleasure.'

"Bad again," said the old Vicar. "I hope I am not proud, my love."—"I am

sure

sure you are not," said she. " But," continued he, " I should almost as soon lay down my office as my independence. I now mount my pulpit as an ambassador from heaven to earth—have no reason for fear, and no temptation to flatter. I strike at the vices of my parish, and strike the harder, as I know them to be the more prevalent. As far as I can see, this said dissenting minister was meant for a more independent Church. But let us read on—"

' After a sitting of a few hours the conclave rose, but not till, after much warm discussion, a resolution had been passed to dismiss the minister. " Like children," said the Vicar, " throwing their physic out of window."

' Here (he proceeded to read), I supposed the matter would have ended; but I then knew little of the facility of separation when the habit is once formed. The key-stone of unity once removed, the building shivers at a mere touch.

The very next day the minority determined to secede with their ejected minister; and, within six months, a new Chapel frowned upon the old one, from the opposite side of the street; and, before the plaister was yet dry, the rheumatic congregation listened to the history of their neighbour's intolerance.'

" My love," said the generous Vicar, " this must be a little highly coloured. Our friend here, you must remember, is very high Church. At least, whatever may be the tendency of dissent, I am willing to believe, such is not its general history. Open a sluice indeed, and the water flows; and, give the tempers a vent, they are almost sure to break out. But let us go on—"

' I, as you may suppose, Sir, continued with the old congregation, the new one not being ripe for any such extravagancies. Nor, indeed, was I any great favourite here. I did hear it whispered, that I should never have been introduced,

but

but for an ill-tempered remark made upon the chief member of the congregation, as he rolled past in a remarkably well-cushioned carriage—about the 'ark of God dwelling in tents.' Here, however, I was placed; and to shew you what use I made of my circumstances, I will give you a very slight sketch of our congregation and ministers during the time I stayed.

I found that the Chapel had been erected at a period when the Clergyman of the parish happened to love sporting far better than preaching. The people who, however wanting in religion themselves, quickly perceive any deficiency in their clergy, soon quitted the Church. And as the dissenting minister preached orthodox doctrines in a spiritual and zealous manner, as moreover for a time, the service was gilded and rendered palatable, by the introduction of a large proportion of the Church prayers—the wandering flock sought food in these foreign pastures. And, in the

first

first instance, they seemed to gain by the exchange. Many of the ignorant were taught, many of the profligate reclaimed—and many of the miserable comforted. During this period, the mass of the congregation were poor. Soon, however, some of the poor becoming rich, obtained an ascendancy in the congregation, and finding one an orthodox, and others a practical religion troublesome to them—ejected, first one minister, and then another, as contending parties prevailed; oscillating for a long time between a fiery Antinomian and a frozen Socinian. For a long time the struggle between flame and frost was doubtful; but, at length, as the weight of influence lay on the side of the Socinians, heterodoxy prevailed. One consequence of this was, that the piety and morals of the pulpit both declined. The next was, that the congregation declined as fast as the doctrines. Socinianism thinned it like the plague. And at last, except that I, and an old man and woman

who

who were stone deaf remained, the words 'My brethren' were absolutely superfluous.'

"My love," said the Vicar—"this fact is worth a thousand arguments. The 'Common people heard (Christ) gladly.' Socinianism never fails to drive them away. A religion without a Saviour is the temple without its glory, and its worshippers will all desert it. No man in the world has less pretensions as a preacher than myself—my voice, my look, my manner, all—"All excellent," said she—"Nearly as bad as possible," said he; "and yet, I thank God, there is scarcely a corner of our little Church where you might not find a streaming eye, or a beating heart. The reason is—that I speak of Christ; and, if there is not a charm in the word, there is in the train of fears, and hopes, and joys, which it carries along with it. The people feel, and then they must listen."

The old Lady, though she differed from

from the Vicar as to his notion of his own voice and manner, quite sympathized with him in all his enthusiasm upon the glorious theme on which he had now entered. A humbler spirit scarcely ever breathed. This humility had carried her to the foot of the cross of Christ, and she seemed to stand there like one of the women who had followed him to his crucifixion. I have seen her hang upon her husband's lips, when he dwelt upon this topic, as if she was listening to the song of the angels—"To you is born this day, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." In Church, it was their darling theme—at home, their continual feast. The sacred name of a Saviour never failed to quell a rising difference, to bind up a wound, to dry up a tear, to shed a sort of sunshine over all their prospects. I shall never forget the emphasis with which she replied to his last sentence—" Yes, my dear—*they* feel, and *I* feel, and if we did not all feel, the stones

stones themselves would cry out If my feelings ever languish, I call to mind our poor Catholic, who, as you well remember, when her priest had prescribed some penance for her sins, after hearing you, burst into the vestry, crying, '*that* is the Saviour I want.' We all want him, and and God be praised, we may all possess him." The old man's heart burned within him as she talked, and he now felt what indeed he had felt a thousand times, *why* he loved his wife.

" But," said he, " to return to the memoir—what a striking history of dissent we have here. In two or three generations, you see the orthodoxy of this Chapel freezing into Socinianism. And this particular history would, I fear, serve for the history of many other Chapels. Socinianism or Arianism now fills the pulpits once occupied by Howe, Owen, or Baxter. Could they return to earth, they would find their lamps burning, not in the once-cherished meeting, but in the

despised and deserted aisles of the Establishment. The over-anxious zeal of their followers soon spent itself. The volcano burnt out, and too often left behind it nothing but the ashes of infidelity. Who ever heard of a dissenting society recovering itself—of their dead in faith walking again? But, in our Church, the dead do walk. At the present moment, a flame of religion has sprung up from the grave in which she was entombed at the Restoration, and walks abroad in many of the churches and colleges of the land. But, my dear, I am talking myself, when I had much better be reading the memoir." And so he took up the manuscript again, and read as follows.

'When I said, Sir, that religion flourished for a time in the congregation, I did not mean to say, that the religion, either in kind or in form, was quite to my taste—and you shall know why. In the first place, I seemed to perceive a great

great want of solemnity in it. It was more like a transaction between man and man, than between man and his God. A sort of unholy familiarity with divine things prevailed. Here many an Uzzah laid his hand upon the ark.'

" And," said the Vicar, " if the men did not ' die' for this unhallowed rashness, yet the system suffered for it. I believe nothing has injured the cause of dissent more."

' Besides this,' he proceeded to read, ' there was a want of majesty in their religion. The church was too like a house. A kind of republican spirit ran through every thing, which denied even the King of Kings, the trappings of his throne, or the curtains of his sanctuary. Then, again, there was often something vulgar in their religion. Many of them seemed to think that piety superseded every other qualification; and thus, those sometimes preached the Gospel who could not read it.'

" Like

" Just like Jeroboam," said the Vicar, " who took of the lowest of the people, and made them priests of the Lord."

" Quite unlike the spirit of the true religion," said his lady, " which required the Jews to exclude every thing blemished from the altar." The old Gentleman had half a dozen more similes ready, but thought it best to read on.

' They used, indeed, to justify this practice by a reference to the first teachers of the Gospel. ' These were fishermen,' they said, but then they forgot they were inspired fishermen—fishermen endowed by miracle with a sufficient acquaintance with many languages, and an accurate knowledge of their own.—But, Sir, these were trifling defects in comparison of those to which I now advance. One capital blot in their public worship was, that they generally neglected to read the Scriptures. It is curious to observe, how extremes meet. The most violent Papists and Antipapists in their public

public services alike interdicted the Bible. —Another great error was, their low estimation of prayer. They threw away your noble form of prayer, that the minister might pray as he pleased. The consequence was, that the people also heard as they pleased, which was often not at all. He prayed, and they looked about them. Prayer with them was a secondary object—the sermon, all in all."

"As if," said the Vicar, "one great end of preaching was not to teach us to pray."

"As if," said his wife, "not prayer, but preaching, was the employment of angels."

"As if," rejoined the Vicar, "God had said—'My house shall be called a house of' preaching, instead of 'a house of prayer"

"Perhaps," said the old Lady, "no one has had stronger temptations than myself to prefer the preaching to the prayers; and yet, my dear, I can truly say,

say, that—take away the liturgy, the solemn moments of intercourse with Heaven, the swell of united voices, and the concord of united hearts in prayer to God—take these away, and that bell which now so cheers my heart every Sunday morning, would lose half its charms for me."

"True, my love—all true," said the Vicar, "with the exception of your praise of me—take away the spirit of prayer, and, though the materials or even the splendour of the temple remain, the "glory," has "departed" from it. When I hear of the exultation of some good, though I humbly think, mistaken men, in the prospect of erecting dissent upon the ruins of the Establishment, I always think of the spectators of the second Jewish temple—the "people indeed (the thoughtless and blind populace), shouted for joy;" "but those who remembered the first temple—wept."

"Such a change is too bad even to think

think of," said the old Lady, "and so, my dear, suppose you read on."

He did.—'I told you, Sir, that I was much given to reflection; and my prejudices, as I have also confessed, lying a little against dissent, perhaps I found out more objections to the system, than have occurred to some others. Two of these, I will mention. In the first place, then, one great maxim of theirs is, 'that every man must have entire liberty to worship God as he pleases.' Now, Sir, no dissenter ever gave men that liberty. Nor is it possible. Would he give it to an Atheist, who insisted in teaching his principles upon Westminster Bridge; or to any of those imposters who have called themselves Jesus Christ, and insisted upon divine honours being paid them? —Another favorite maxim of theirs is, 'that no man should be made to pay for religious instruction *before* he himself desires to have it.' This scheme seems to me to forget the corruption of human nature—

nature—for how few would pay for instruction, who were able to avoid paying. The Establishment, on the contrary, remembers that man is fallen, forces him to provide the means, and trusts that the conversion may follow.'

Here the old Vicar put down his paper to think of these arguments. What his Lady did, in the mean time, it is impossible to say. All I know is, that, about half an hour after the time he may be supposed to have read this period, both were discovered by John, who, with some suspicion of the fact, looked gently in at the door, in a profound sleep. So he left them; and, as there is a break in the manuscript at this point, so will we leave them. Indeed, I do not know why any one should wish to disturb them. It was their high, though rare privilege, never to fall asleep without a well-founded hope that, if they never rose again in this world, they should awake in another and a happier.

Surely,

Surely, if many had such a hope, we should have more good sleepers in the world. And I firmly believe, that every other prescription to ensure good sleep is useless, till this is taken.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER VIII.

How long the Vicar suffered under this infirmity of his nature, I am unable to say. The next morning he rose, as he always did, very early, and long before his lady approved of his rising. Not but she loved "the sweet hour of prime" herself—but she saw evidently that the good old man daily grew older: and she could not help thinking that more sleep would be good for him. But I believe she was mistaken.—The pure air—the undisturbed possession of God and nature—the quiet bracing of his mind for his daily duties—the order and leisure which early rising secured to him for the day to come, were still better for him. And, sometimes, when, on joining him before breakfast in his study, she saw his face, like that of Moses after his descent from the Mount, and his high converse with God, glisten-

ing

ing with inward peace and joy—with the comfortable sense of the Divine presence—she thought so too.—But, to return,—After a day spent, as, upon a dying bed, we shall wish to have spent every day—he sat down again, with a glad heart, to his manuscript.

'And, now, Sir,' he continued to read, 'I come to an event of my life, which is not the less interesting to me as it led to my connection with yourself.' The old gentleman involuntarily bowed his head, and read on.—'Such is the change in human things, that I, who had a few years since been esteemed too splendid for the pulpit of dissent, was now deemed too shabby. The congregation, as I said, had decayed in piety—but it had increased in wealth. Indeed, this very increase was partly the cause of this very decay. Dissent, like every other republic, rarely remains pure after it begins to be wealthy! Its purity depends upon its alienation from the world, with which

riches

riches almost necessarily incorporate it. So happened it now. The increased riches of the congregation lured it into the vortex of ecclesiastical splendour—and the first thing cast overboard was my poor self. It was decided, in vestry, unanimously, with the exception at least of a single primitive old gentleman, who most pathetically pleaded the distresses of some poor widows in the congregation—that the "old cushion," as they were pleased to call me, should be discarded, and a new one, becoming the dignity of the congregation, be substituted in my place.'

"Old!!!" said the Vicar, "One of the virtues of Sparta was, a reverence for age. And I never heard of a Commonwealth, great or small, which flourished without it. For my part, it is the very age of my cushion which I honour. I never touch it without fancying I lay my hand where Latimer or Ridley have laid their's. I like nothing new in religion

gion—new translations, new doctrines, new systems. It is not a *terra incognita* in which any new discoveries are to be made." What this speech of the Vicar had to do with the Cushion it is difficult to say; but these wanderings may be excused in a good old man accustomed to short texts and long sermons. He soon returned to his manuscript.

'I confess, Sir, that I heard of my dismissal without any regret. My early habits unfitted me for dissent. I felt much tenderness, indeed, for the scrupulous dissenter, and much admiration of their general zeal; but I saw nothing which led me to think that, on the whole, stones of the church would be better employed in building meetings. The Dissenters are often important auxiliaries to the Church,—but they would be bad substitutes for it.—But I proceed. The changes in my circumstances were many and great. I passed through a variety of meetings. At length, I fell from public

public into private life. And I shall beg to describe to you a few persons whose private devotions it was my lot to assist.

'Vetusta was the first. She was an aged lady, who, to the surprise of a good many gay friends, had lately possessed herself of some devout books, and of myself; and had, moreover, taken down some dubious pictures of nymphs and satyrs in her dressing-room to fit it up as an oratory.—Few people had run a more various course than Vetusta. She was a woman of unusually strong passions; for which, in her earliest years, she found a sufficient employment in a life of ceaseless dissipation. When, what is called pleasure, ceased to stimulate, she gave herself to books. When books also had lost their influence, she found a vacuum which she hoped religion might fill up. And, accordingly, by another roll of the wheel, she took up religion. Sensation was what she wanted—and

pleasure,

pleasure, books, devotion, were the successive substances out of which it was to be extracted. All were used much in the same spirit; and, it is not harsh to say, that she was just as much a Christian on her knees at sixty as at her toilet thirty years before. Admitted to her privacies, I narrowly watched this stimulating process. She read, talked, prayed, all that she might *feel;* and, so that she felt, cared little for the effect of her devotions upon her life and temper.'

"Such religion," said the Vicar, "is little better than dram-drinking. It is more decent, perhaps, but not less noxious. But, my dear," he added, "I would not be harsh. I fear the religion of many an old man is of the same complexion with that of Vetusta. We give ourselves to God when nothing else will have us, and think ourselves in search of him when, in fact, we are only in quest of our early sensations. The question is, whether, if I were young, I should be

be willing to give the morning of life, the season of enjoyment, to God?"

"You forget, my love," said his lady, "that you did love and serve God in your youth."

"I thank God," replied the Vicar, "that, after my humble manner, I, in some measure did; but he who has had fifty years acquaintance with his own heart, can scarcely believe that a tide of temptation, stronger by a single wave than that by which he is now assailed, did not overwhelm him. But the truth is, God "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,' or rather, he hides the lambs of his flock in his own bosom."—He proceeded to read—

'When Vetusta died, I lay beside her, bearing the last book of devotion with which a poor niece who stood by had fruitlessly endeavoured to shed a ray of heavenly comfort upon the cheerless death bed of her aunt. Vestuta, though she had ceased to love any thing here, felt

felt nothing but a chilly horror of an hereafter. The car which had, as it were, borne her affections from the earth, had not, like that of the prophet, translated them to heaven. She hung in suspense between two worlds, tired of the one, and unfit for the other. Such a death-bed shut out all the hopes which light up the dying eyes of a real christian. Her niece no sooner saw the last breath quivering on her lips, than, shuddering at the awful scene, she almost unconsciously snatched me up, and the volume lying upon me, carried me to her chamber, locked the door, and then poured forth such a prayer to God as grief, the yawning chasm of the grave, the awful visions of eternity of which she had just caught a glimpse, were calculated to inspire. I became her property, lay in her closet, and saw and heard her in all her future moments of intercourse with God and with herself; and, from her peculiar character and circumstances,

soon felt a singular interest in her fate. The lesson taught by her little history is so useful, that it ought to be told to almost every parent but yourself, who have no need to learn it. And you, Sir, so love the young, that you will rejoice to see a beacon lighted up for other parents, though it may be useless to yourself. I shall, therefore, perform this important office.

'The name, then, of my new protectress was Selina; and a gentler spirit was scarcely ever let loose amidst the snares and tumults of the world. She had been taken from her parents by her aunt four years before I saw her. They were persons of the cast which would be called amiable—but amiable, rather, from easiness of temper, than from strength of principle. They had, indeed, little or no religion; and her father, especially, a man of almost morbid delicacy, on account of some indefensible conduct in a neighbour professing religion,

gion, had contracted a strong antipathy to it. Their very narrow circumstances, and his infirm health, had induced them to resign her to her aunt; and both parents and child felt a real pang in the separation. They loved her as an amiable child deserved to be loved; and she loved them too well to observe any of their numerous defects.

Once introduced into her aunt's family, she soon perceived a great change in the appearance of things. The apparatus of religion surrounded her on every side. The devotions of the family were many and long; and her aunt, finding a new stimulus in the work of converting her niece, gave herself cordially to it; bridled her temper, and strongly and eloquently pleaded the cause of religion. The mind of Selina was soon awed by the warnings of her gloomy monitress. She began to discover that, at least, the 'terror of the law' had been veiled at home—that she herself had been stand-

ing, perhaps, on the verge of perdition; without knowing it; and, adopting by degrees the creed and habits of her teacher, she fell into the formal, superstitious observance of such rites as her aunt prescribed. Far, indeed, was the religion she embraced from that of the gospel. It was, in fact, the law without the gospel—it was religion in eclipse—the dark without the illuminated part of the heavenly disc. Terror was her prevalent feeling. She saw God alone as he sits pavilioned in clouds, rolling the thunders, and flashing the lightnings of Mount Sinai; but not as he descends shorn of his beams, and with healing in his wings, upon the holy hill of Sion. This view of God naturally darkened all her prospects, and converted her religion into a sort of desponding effort to soothe, by her future life, the wrath of this despotic and vindictive Being. The character of the house corresponded with this state of mind. Her aunt, in order to rouze her

her own feelings, surrounded herself with all those symbols of religion which were best calculated to awaken her exhausted sensibilities; and these, however lost upon herself, produced their full effect upon her niece. She became fitter for La Trappe, than for the holy, happy life of a Christian.'

The old Vicar here laid down the manuscript. "My dear, said he, "I almost shudder while I read this history. Is not God our Father, and shall we exhibit him to our children, and tremble before him ourselves as a mere tyrant? Shall not the happy face of nature—her scented flowers, her painted fruits, her golden harvests, yon 'brave unchanging firmament,' the shining lamps of heaven, the 'moon walking in her brightness,'—shall not this blessed book (and he once more emphatically laid his hand upon it) which is nothing less than a present deity—shall not, above all, the death of His dear son for a lost world, teach

teach us that 'God is love,'—that not mere awe, but awe tempered, softened, and illuminated by love is to be felt for him who thus 'first loved us?'

"Among the many causes which attach me to the services of our own church, this has always been one—its freedom from gloom and sternness—its mild, amiable, paternal spirit. Our dear child, my love, (and the tears rolled down his aged cheeks as he spoke) is, I doubt not, gone to heaven. And if I were called upon to name the means which most, under the divine blessing, contributed to his early ripeness for it, I should say it was his mother's anxious care, as he walked by the way, at his lying down, and at his rising up, to set before him the image of God as a tender and compassionate father. At least, my love, the curse is not upon you of having given him dishonourable views of God—of having put him in the cleft of the rock while the Lord passed by without letting

letting him hear the glorious proclamation—the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

The old gentleman had touched a tender chord. It was their only child of whom he had been speaking. He had come up, and was cut down like a flower. And though they had long ceased to mourn over him, and felt, at their age, that the line of separation was dwindling to nothing, yet whenever they spoke of him, they could speak of nothing else. They would sit together, and search their memories, and perhaps their imagination, for materials to build up a sort of little parental monument to his early charms and virtues. Thus they spent almost an hour now, and then, having consigned themselves in prayer to that heavenly Father, to whom their boy was gone, I need not say, they slept in peace.

CHAP-

CHAPTER IX.

The Vicar and his lady, however, were too much interested in the history of Selina, to lose the first opportunity of returning to it. And we therefore will return with them.

'Selina was deeply affected at the death of her aunt; not, indeed, because she loved her, for that was next to impossible; but the scenes of death passing before an already disordered eye, had scared her with the most terrible visions. Nor had the dying language of her aunt yielded her spirits the smallest relief. She had died, and, as it were, 'made no sign' of her hopes of any better and brighter state of being. Selina, as she hung over her corpse, saw, indeed, the ashes of the dead, but did not discover among them that bright spark of hope and joy which is to blaze anew in the kingdom

kingdom of God. The state, therefore, in which she was left was truly melancholy. She was not religious—she was superstitious. She felt herself guilty, but had never been taught to lift her eyes to the cross of a Saviour. She felt herself weak, but no one had led her to the 'Comforter,'—to that 'Spirit' who, with his holy fire, dries up the tears of the miserable. In these sad circumstances she tried various means of approaching her God. She shed many bitter tears—she denied herself even those allowed indulgences which a gracious God has so profusely spread around us—she ran through a daily circle of unmeaning ceremonies. But, in all this her poor wounded conscience found no consolation; for man is not meant to be his own Saviour. It might have been hoped, indeed, that she would have found her cure amidst the pages of the bible, which she daily read, but this she had learned to pervert, so as to suit

own gloomy views. She pointed all its terrors at herself, and gave all its promises to others. Soon the evil spread, like a cloud, over every thing she saw. All around her began to invest itself with new terrors. She fancied a sword across every path, and a hand writing upon every wall.

Her sad circumstances were, of course, soon made known to her parents; and, though their tenderness protracted her fall, they, ignorant of religion themselves, were unable to supply the proper pillar for her sinking mind. A consumption followed, and I saw her, at nineteen, carried out to her grave, the unripe victim of a neglected education, and a spurious faith.'

Here the old Vicar gave a deep groan. His lady sobbed. "And, thus," she exclaimed, "was a 'lamb' of the 'Great Shepherd,' whom he would have 'carried in his bosom,' left to perish on the cold and naked rocks. Oh, that you had found

found her, my love. She should have been to us as a daughter. 'Cruel indeed to shew her only the fence of the pastures, and not the " still waters of comfort" within it—to teach her this *half* religion."

" *Half*," said the Vicar, " nothing but your gentleness could give it so mild a name—a superstitious fear of God is no part of religion—it dishonours God. It strips him of the attribute of mercy, and so strikes out the brightest jewel of his crown."

" True," said the old Lady, " and yet I dare say, that the wretchedness and death of this poor young creature were charged altogether upon religion."

" Upon that very religion," replied the Vicar, " which alone could have bound up her wounds—wounds inflicted by the irreligion of her parents, and the superstition of her aunt. Religion has no misery to answer for. It is true, that its stupendous truths, rashly flashed upon the

the already disordered imagination, may, like the light of the sun, poured in rashly upon the diseased eye, overpower it. But men would not quench the sun, because some organs are too weak to bear its lustre—nor must religion be extinguished, because its sublimities may perchance overwhelm a diseased mind. Rather let the mind be elevated to religion, than religion be prostrated to the mind. At the same time, tenderness is due to the infirm. And our Lord himself felt and displayed it. What painter who has sketched a portrait of Christ, ever thought of arming him with thunders. No—love was his weapon; and I feel sure, that this is the weapon his ministers should chiefly employ. Chaucer's picture of a Clergyman, and the image by which he illustrates it, delight me—

> 'He preach'd the Gospel, rather than the Law,
> And forc'd himself to drive, but lov'd to draw.—
> —— Thunder and light'ning, Heav'n's artillery,
> As harbingers before th' Almighty fly.

These

These but proclaim his style, and disappear—
The *stiller voice* succeeds, and *God is there.*'

Now it happened that this picture and this image equally delighted the old Lady; and for this especial reason, that she always said it was as like her husband, as though he had sat for it. So as both were too much exhausted to read more, he sat thinking of the picture, and wishing to be like it—and she, thinking of her husband and wishing to be like him—till it was more than time to go to bed.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER X.

When the good Vicar next resumed his task, he read as follows.

'As the death of the poor girl was altogether charged upon religion, and as I was considered both as a cause and memorial of her fate, neither religion nor I were likely to be in good repute in the house. Her father and mother, indeed, seemed to view me, passive as I was in the business, with a sort of horror, and she in particular, I remember, having one day opened the door and discovered me on the table, seemed to shudder—hastily shut the door again, and hurried away. In these circumstances, it was long doubtful what would become of me; whether the cat or the lap-dog should permanently lay their head on the Cushion of vicars and prelates. At last, an old housekeeper who had always discovered

discovered much pity for the young lady, much horror of her aunt, and who, though tremendously cross, never failed to hobble off three times in the week to a large meeting in the neighbourhood, deeming her own pretensions at least equal to those of her four-footed competitors, carried me up to her own little room. I do not know that I should have thought it worth while to dwell on this part of my history, but for two reasons—that my present proprietor was so singular a contrast to my last—and that the faults of both served to convince me of a truth which many wise folks never learn at all—that the widest extreme to wrong is not always right.'

"*Always!*" said the Vicar—"the truth seems to be that it is *never* right. The opposite to profuseness, is avarice—to tyranny, is anarchy—to bigotry, is enthusiasm. Almost all reformers in Church, except, indeed, those of my own dear Church and country, appear to me to split

split on this very rock. It was the moral, I doubt not, taught by the old story of Scylla and Charybdis. We tell the story—and forget the moral. Good old England has, through God's blessing, remembered both; and accordingly, we have a Protestant Church, and a free State, with which a wise Papist or a sober tyrant find it almost impossible to quarrel. For my part, though I abhor Popery, I honor the little harmless relics of it, which I see in our Church, as so many monuments of the moderation of my forefathers.—But, let us go on.—I dare say, our friend here meant the same thing."

"I dare say it did," said the old Lady.

Thus firmly agreed, as they were sure to be in all charitable conjectures, they proceeded.

'The old housekeeper, though she called herself a Calvinist, was in fact an Antinomian. Independent of her opinions about Predestination, and the rest of the five

five points, she really believed that the law of God had little or no force for an advanced Christian. Consequently her rule was to live as she pleased, and to believe as the minister of the chapel taught her. I ought to say, that this minister was in general disowned by his brother dissenters, who, whether Calvinists or Arminians, concurred to condemn Antinomianism. I learned this fact from frequent conferences held in my presence, between the members of the society on the persecution of what they called the Church.—But you shall hear some particulars of the old Lady's creed and practice.

'Her religious errors seemed to me chiefly to spring from two causes—one without, and one within—one, the cold and unamiable religion of her mistress, which drove her to an opposite extreme—and the other, a mind of strong feelings, and no industry. Her history is, I believe, by no means peculiar. She had always

always been remarked as a woman of acute sensibility, and wretched temper—repairing, by the embraces of one moment, the petulance of another—perpetually changing her friends and her pursuits. At length, some sermon alarmed her conscience. At once, and almost without an effort, she shifted from the side of the world to that of religion. Those wondered at the change who did not remember that many change their party without changing their tempers; and indeed quit their present sphere only to seek in another, a more unrestrained indulgence of these very tempers. Thus was it with the old lady. In her new character she contrived to lend many of her most offensive qualities a new grace; and to baptize them with a new name. Her petulance gained thevery honourable title of zeal—her restlessness, of activity—her changeableness, of independence. Nor did she, as it were, at a single plunge sink into the depths in which

which I found her. Her descent, however, was rapid—because she was, in fact, following nature, when she thought she was following God. The benefit which might have been expected from some honest preachers whom she had occasionally heard, was entirely forfeited by one practice—namely, that of leaving every preacher the instant he condemned any cherished indulgence. Thus she had gone through the whole circle of popular ministers; and, finally, had come to a conclusion, that her present minister was nearly the last prophet, and she herself, nearly the only Christian in the country. Her self-delusion was indeed almost incredible. She would start up furiously from the 14th chapter of St. John, to thunder at a housemaid; and wash down a sermon with a copious draught of brandy.'

"Worse and worse," said the Vicar as he finished the tale—"was ever Cushion so unfortunate? I suppose it might have

have passed through nine-tenths of the congregations in the country, and not have found ten such cases."

"Are you sure of that?" asked his Lady.

"I am sure, my love, of nothing," replied he, "but I cannot understand how any ten people should go mad precisely on the same point; and I can call her state nothing short of insanity."

"But," said she, "I have heard Calvinism charged with necessarily leading to enormities of this kind."

"Then your reporters, my dear," said he, "were not to be trusted. You know, that I am no Calvinist—that I agree with Calvin perhaps in scarcely a single point in which he disagrees with Arminius. My testimony, therefore, in vindication of Calvinism may be heard. To say then, that it 'necessarily,' or even generally leads to Antinomianism, is as unjust as to charge the Church with all the robberies and murders of those who profess

fess her communion. Hooker, Usher, Hall, Leighton, and many, if not most of the fathers of the Reformation, were Calvinists, and yet, who ever thought of charging them with Antinomianism? But that very high Calvinism easily admits of, and not unfrequently suffers such a perversion—appears to me true, and in my mind constitutes a no small objection to that system."

" I have often thought of asking, my love, what you thought of the conversation of Cromwell with his chaplain, when on his dying bed."

" Cromwell," said the Vicar, " asked, if I remember right, " whether a man who had been once in a state of grace, could fall away?" And upon his chaplain answering " No—" " Then," said he, " I am safe, for I am sure that I once was in a state of grace." Now, to say nothing of this " no," of the chaplain," continued the Vicar, " for which I might have felt disposed to substitute another monosyllable—

monosyllable—if this was the whole of the conversation, I may venture to add, that every wise Calvinist will allow the chaplain to be criminal, and the Protector deluded. Even, in assuming the truth of the doctrine, Cromwell was plainly deluded in his judgment of his own state, and the chaplain as plainly criminal in suffering him to die in that delusion."

"A pious and moderate Calvinist," said the old Lady, who had been reading a chapter in Archbishop Leighton (the most formidable of all controversialists, because every devout reader must be afraid to disagree with him), "that very morning finds much both in Scripture and in reason to say for his system."

"He does, indeed," said the charitable old man; "he finds so much that I am never astonished or angry with those who come to a precisely opposite conclusion on these points to my own. As to Scripture, however, be it remembered, that

if

if some single passages seem to favour that system, the general spirit of the Bible appears to be against it. The delineations of God as an universal Father—the universal promises, invitations, exhortations to all, to awake, to arise, to turn, to pray, seem to me to belong to a more comprehensive scheme. Can the gracious God of the Scriptures mean all this for only a small portion of his creatures?

"The doctrine of election has, I think, one merit," said the old lady; "it teaches those who believe it to love and honour God."

"Am I, then," answered the Vicar, "likely to love and honour God less because I believe that he makes to all the offers which others believe he makes only to a few?"

"But surely," she continued, "there is much comfort in their other tenet of final perseverance—in feeling that "God will never forsake his true servants."

"The

"There is, indeed," said the Vicar; "but, thank God, I, who am no Calvinist, believe as firmly as they can do, that 'God never forsakes his *true* servants.' The Calvinist cannot be more sure than another that he is a true Christian; and if not sure, his creed is no peculiar comfort to him. If sure even of our sincerity, who has reason, upon any system, to fear that he shall be forsaken? Why should that sun of mercy now forsake us which, amidst all the storms, and crimes, and follies of life, has never yet gone down. My love, I have been young, and now am old; and, from infancy to that verge of second infancy on which I stand, such has been the wholly unmerited compassion of my God, so often has he stretched out to me the golden sceptre of his mercy—so often, when guilty, pardoned—when infirm, strengthened—and when miserable, shed around me the sun-shine of his presence, that I am sure 'he *would* not I should perish.'

'I

"I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded," that as long as I endeavour, by his help, to stretch out this "withered arm" for mercy, (and as he spoke, he stretched out an arm indeed withered in the service of the sanctuary)—as long as I endeavour, in complete distrust of myself, to take hold even of the hem of his garment, I shall find 'virtue go out of him' to heal all my infirmities, and cleanse all my sins. This is my confidence, and if others have more, I thank God for their happiness, but am content with my own."

Now, such was the humility of the good old man, that he had never been heard to speak as triumphantly of his own hopes before. And, even now, he seemed to blush for an avowal which not self-complacency, but love and gratitude to God had forced from him. After a short pause, he added,—"I wish, my love, in general, to speak neither of myself, nor of the disputable points in

 reli-

religion. As to myself, I am sure of but one thing—that I am a most unworthy servant of a God, to whose mercy, from beginning to end, I must owe my salvation. And, as to Calvinists and Arminians—as there are only five points on which they differ, and at least five hundred on which, if real Christians, they agree, I desire to embrace all the articles of our common faith, and leave the rest to be settled in heaven."

"Perhaps you think," said she, "that they will never be settled on earth."

"I do," answered the Vicar. "Under various shapes, they have perplexed the philosophers and divines of all ages. My own creed is this—if a Calvinist so hold his opinion as to lead a holy life, and an Arminian so hold his as to preserve a humble spirit, I believe the principles of neither will exclude them from heaven."

After this, the Vicar, who knew that no position was so safe for a man of his own

own sentiments as prostration before God, knelt down; and, like the giant, refreshing himself by touching on his mother earth, recruited, I doubt not, all his hopes, and views, and joys, by intercourse and communion with his God.

CHAPTER XI.

The Vicar and his lady were not long before they returned to the manuscript, and read as follows :

'I will not detain you, Sir, over the next stages in my history, nor even with describing to you the exact circumstances by which, when the Methodists started up in the middle of the eighteenth century, I found my way to one of their earliest pulpits. But, of what I saw and heard on this new and somewhat giddy eminence, you will expect me to say something. For a time, then, I own that I was, on the whole, much gratified. You well know, Sir, my love for the Reformers. How, then, was I pleased to see some of those doctrines which seemed almost to have sunk under ground with those holy men, now springing up within the walls of a little methodist chapel.

I will

I will not say that they sprang up alone, or without a few tares scattered among them by the hands of their new cultivators. But, it must be confessed, that the very first leaders of the methodists, if men of somewhat coarse taste, and untempered zeal, were men both of talent and piety. For a season, at least, their preaching offended against little, except good breeding. They generally avoided disputable ground, and insisted on the fundamental points of religion, in bold, vehement, eloquent, practical language. They called themselves Churchmen, and I really believe they loved the church. Great was the impression produced by them. Many of the Clergy started, as from a dream, and buckled on their ministerial armor. I have seen, Sir, the church-walls dripping with the condensed breath of the almost countless congregations. I have seen the tears of penitential sorrow scooping out to themselves white channels in the dingy

dingy faces of poor colliers, whose minds before were as dark as the pits they inhabited. I have seen thousands who, as the early Christians brought their books of magic and burned them, cast all their sins and sorrows upon the altar of God, and found that flame consume them all. Great, indeed, as I said, was the effect produced; but, alas! so great as, among many other far better results, to turn the heads of the preachers. For, now, Sir, mark the change. Soon the respect for the church ceased. Soon one of the most common topics of pulpit raillery and amusement was the universal profligacy of the clergy. Soon the widest breaches were made in church discipline. Soon enthusiasm usurped, to a great degree, the throne of sober piety. Uneducated men were introduced into the pulpits. A desire to excite, to inflame, to harrow up, to revolutionize, combined itself, to say the least, with the desire to convince. Coarse and fanciful

ciful interpretations of scripture abounded. Something very like miracles were assumed to have been wrought in favour of the new system. And the whole issued in a sort of dislocation of the church; which, though not rapid or palpable enough to alarm the unwary, threatens, perhaps, more than any other cause, to destroy the church, and, in the end, to bury religion in its grave.'

Here, the old Vicar, as though he beheld the precise picture painted in the memoir—his own little church sinking into dust, and religion, in the act of suffocation, just peeping out of one of the graves, clasped his hands together in utter dismay. "My dear," said he, in an agony of grief, "I have had this vision before my eyes a thousand times; and though I daily, on my bended knees, thank God for all the profligates reclaimed by the methodists, in common with other labourers; for their toils and triumphs among the poor idolaters and slaves;

slaves; and for the sort of stimulus they have given to our good mother the Church; yet I fear, such is the character of the religion they too often disseminate, and such their depreciation of church ministers, that they will ultimately ruin the church they undertake to save."

"Is it right for you, my love," said the old lady, "to condemn either the character of their religion, or their conduct towards its ministers, when old Betty tells me they preach precisely your doctrines, and even pray for yourself every Sunday of their lives?"

"As to the entire resemblance of our *doctrines*," replied the Vicar, "either I or Betty must be mistaken. For their *prayers* I thank them; and may their God and my God so hear and answer them, as to make me better. Their favourable opinion of me (he continued, smiling,) must, I fear, be set down among their errors of judgment. But let us hope

hope that so charitable a mistake will be forgiven, and that it may be less of a mistake every day. Still, whatever be their approbation of me, I should even less deserve it than I do, if I suffered it to bribe me into a dishonest applause of them. I must plainly say, that I have an objection both to the character of their religion, and to a part of their practice. To their religion, I object that it has usually more of impulse, noise, excitement, of 'fits and frames' than I find either in the Bible or the Liturgy. And to their practice I have this objection, that they too often teach the people to suspect and undervalue their ministers—to require a fresh one every week. There was a time, my love, when a good clergyman was regarded as the general father of his flock—when all their wants, wishes, fears, hopes, doubts, and plans were laid before him—when the sheep followed his voice, and the voice of a stranger would they not fol-

low—when, if he kept to his Bible, they would cleave to him. Now, this sort of filial feeling is gone. They have shepherds many, and fathers many. The preacher in the church is deserted, at least at one part of the day, for the preacher at the meeting. The people, when they should be learning, are criticising; and refuse to profit from any minister till they have settled which is the best."

"Does all this," asked the old lady, "alarm you for the church?"

"I confess," he answered, "it does. These children of ours serve us as the Hindoos do their irrecoverable or even sick parents. Instead of binding up their wounds, they throw them into the Ganges. This is not humane, or even decent; and if it were, surely we are not bad enough to be given over."

"And if the church falls, my love, what will become of the methodists?"

"I will, in return, my dear, ask you a ques-

a question. If the branches, angry at the seeming inactivity and fruitlessness of the stem, were to succeed in bringing it to the ground, what would happen to the branches?"

"Why, exactly, my love, what will happen," she said, "to my young chickens if I do not get them under the hen before sun-set. So off she went to her little brood.

Whether the image of the hen and chicken, because her own, at once convinced the good old lady, I am unable to say; nor can I say whether the project then rushed into her head, of hatching an egg, which should produce a bird, which should produce a quill, which should, in her dear husband's hand, produce an essay, which should convince all the methodists in all the world, of the duty of returning to the wing of the mother church. Certain it is, that she, at that instant, did order Betty

to

to set a goose in a favourite corner of the hen-house, which did soon fulfil at least a part of the wishes of her sanguine mistress.

That the Vicar himself may have taken something of a similar resolution may perhaps, be inferred from the following lines which were found after his death written on the first page of his folio edition of 'Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity,' with this title prefixed.

'THE VILLAGE CHURCH.'

And is our country's father* fled,
His car of fire can none recall?
Be—*here* his sacred spirit shed,
Here—may his prophet mantle fall.
Fain would I fill the vacant breach,
Stand where he stood the plague to stay;
In his prophetic spirit preach,
And in his hallowed accents pray.

2.

It is not that on seraph's wing,
I hope to soar where he has soared;
This, this the lowly claim I bring,
I love *his* church, I love his Lord.

* Hooker.

I love the altar of my Sires,
Old as my country's rocks of steel;
And as I feed its sacred fires,
The present Deity I feel.

3.

I love to know that, not alone,
I meet the battle's angry tide;
That sainted myriads from their throne
Descend to combat at my side.
Mine is no solitary choice,
See *here* the seal of saints impress'd;
The prayer of millions swells my voice,
The mind of ages fills my breast.

4.

I love the ivy-mantled *tower*,
Rock'd by the storms of thousand years;
The *grave* whose melancholy flower
Was nourished by a martyr's tears.
The sacred *yew*, so feared in war,
Which, like the sword to David given,
Inflicted not a human scar,
But lent to man the arms of heaven.

5.

I love the organ's joyous swell,
Sweet echo of the heavenly ode;
I love the cheerful village bell,
Faint emblem of the call of God.
Waked by the sound, I bend my feet,
I bid my swelling sorrows cease;
I do but touch the mercy seat,
And hear the still small voice of peace.

6.

And, as the ray of evening fades,
I love amidst the dead to stand;
Where, in the altar's deepening shades,
I seem to meet the ghostly band.
One comes—Oh! mark his sparkling eye,
I knew his faith, his strong endeavour;
Another---Ah! I hear him sigh,
Alas! and is he lost for ever?

7.

Another treads the shadowy aisle,
I know him—'tis my sainted sire—
I know his patient, angel smile,
His shepherd's voice, his eye of fire;
His ashes rest in yonder urn,
I saw his death, I clos'd his eye;
Bright sparks amidst those ashes burn,
That death has taught me how to die.

5.

Long be our Father's temple our's,
Woe to the hand by which it falls;
A thousand spirits watch its towers,
A cloud of angels guard its walls.
And be *their* shield by us possess'd,
Lord, rear around thy blest abode
The buttress of a holy breast,
The rampart of a present God.

CHAPTER

CHAPTER XII.

When the Vicar returned to his manuscript, he read as follows:

'I am now, Sir, approaching the last great crisis of my life, the time of my finally leaving London for the hills of Westmoreland. The cause of my removal was this. At the moment when the meeting, of which I was the only ornament and superfluity, was built, the church was filled by the second son of a noble family, whose want of talents had early designated him, willing or unwilling, to spend the tithes of a considerable living.'

"Monstrous," said the Vicar. "I trust such offences are rare. Can any profession demand loftier talents? Shall the representative of God be chosen from the lowest orders of his creation? Shall *he* be selected to enter the sanctuary

tuary, to unravel the web of prophecy, to hurl the thunders of heaven, to unveil that awful image before which angels hide their faces, to display to thousands the interminable regions of joy and sorrow—who has scarce faculties for the common offices of life? If I had a son with the talents of an angel, I would carry him, like Samuel, to the temple; or, like Hannibal, to the altar of his country, and there consecrate him as the soldier of the cross, the eternal enemy of ignorance and guilt."

"Read on, my love," said the old lady, who saw him here touching on the verge of that topic which of all others most wrung his heart—the loss of a darling child. He understood her, and began again to read.

'The young clergyman was an easy, kind-hearted creature, who might have seconded an address, or even have presided at a turnpike meeting with considerable effect; but had neither piety nor

nor vigor for his sacred employment. His people were grossly neglected. The 'hungry sheep looked up and were not fed,' and they accordingly sought for what they deemed more productive pastures. And the meeting, which waited, like Absalom in the gate, for all the discontented, and promised to supply all their wants, soon filled itself with the stragglers. But the young incumbent broke his neck in a fox-chase; and his wretched father, softened and shocked at the event, and at the state of the parish, appointed such a pastor to the living as made every good man's heart leap for joy. Our meeting was soon, in its turn, abandoned; and I slumbered over a large surface of empty pews. Upon this the chapel was closed; and I, with the pulpit, conveyed once more to a pawnbroker's. The pulpit was bought by an auctioneer, and I by the churchwardens of this very parish; who, finding rates high, and corn low, and velvet scarce,

scarce, on account of a war with the continent, carried me off, torn and tarnished as I was, with a phrase not very honourable either to me or to the establishment, saying—'this 'ull do.' Thus, then, Sir, bearing the burden of the fatter of these church dignitaries, I was jolted down to this happy valley. This has been the last scene of my life, and, I am free to say, the happiest.

'But, Sir, you will be anxious, I am sure, to hear the history of some of your predecessors in the living. And it is my intention to gratify you. I think it right, however, to observe, that, of a large proportion of them, no very interesting records remain. Mankind are much alike. And a little country village is not likely to call out their peculiarities. Some few were mere profligates, whose memory I do not wish to perpetuate. Many of them were persons of decent, cold, correct manners, varying slightly, perhaps, in

in the measure of their zeal, their doctrinal exactness, their benevolence, their industry, their talents—but, in general, of that neutral class which rarely affords materials for history, or subjects of instruction. They were men of that species who are apt to spring up in the bosom of old and prosperous establishments, whose highest praise is that they do no harm.

'The first person whose history I shall give you is one, of a class exceedingly small. He indeed is the only specimen of it that, in my long experience, I have chanced to see. But his errors are of so mischievous a nature, and the punishment of them in his case, was so signal, that I cannot consent to pass them over.

'*Munster*, for so I will call him, was a spoiled child. He lost his father early; and his mother, captivated by the strength of his attachment, which naturally centered all in her, requited it by anticipating all his whims, and indulging all his caprice

caprice and ill temper. In consequence, he became peevish, headstrong, and passionate. Now and then, indeed, some better qualities seemed, as it were, to flash in his character. But the gleam was only for a moment, and seemed to leave a deeper gloom behind. His feelings were quick—his spirits variable. He loved and hated, worked and idled, laughed and cried, all in a moment, and always in excess.

'When sent to school, he was chiefly distinguished by quarrelling with the larger half of his school-fellows, and forming the rest into a party against them, of which his vehemence rather than his talents or industry, made him the leader. And, the habits of school, he carried to college, where he was chiefly known as a person whom no one liked, and whom every one feared. These numerous defects were, however, brightened by one more promising quality. He had acquired under the eye of his mother, who, though

though a weak, was really a pious woman, a certain awe of gross sin. The effect of this, however was, not to correct his life, but to reduce it to a sort of alternation of sin and sorrows. Such a life could make no man happy; and, especially one who had few friends to cheer him, little real taste for dissipation, and that kind of bilious habit, which is apt to divide the life of its victim between anger and melancholy. In such a state, therefore, he was not likely to remain long. And accordingly, on a sudden, he proclaimed himself a converted character. He forsook at once, not only his vices, but his college occupations—not only his profligate, but his moral companions. His acquaintance looked on with astonishment. The good trembled when they saw such hands laid on the ark of God. The bad scoffed to find religion with such a champion. But Munster went on his way, heedless both of the one, and of the other. He soon entered

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the Church, and became the curate of this very parish. And here, I shall endeavour to describe him, first, as a minister; and next, as the father of a family.

'His doctrines were, in the main, those of the Scriptures, and of the Reformers. But then he held and taught them *less practically* than either. His grand maxim, for instance, was, 'preach of faith, and works will follow'—whereas, the Bible and the Church evidently deem the same attention due to both—concluding, that a man is just as likely to act as to think wrong.'

"The hands of my watch," said the Vicar, "are quite as incorrect as the wheels. But let us read on."

'Neither did the spirit of *moderation* in these high authorities satisfy him. Sometimes, he so magnified a truth, as to strain it to the dimensions of error. Sometimes he seemed to reduce the whole of religion to a single doctrine. In short,

as

as some men possess the art of giving error the air of truth, so he gave truth the complexion and the nature of error. Few men had a better creed; and few put a worse interpretation to it.'

'But, however defective his opinions might be, his life was far worse. Although ardent in the pulpit, and in the discharge of most other *public* duties, his zeal did not extend to the more retired duties of his office. He rarely, for instance, sought out in the remote corners of his parish those lambs of his flock, who either had not yet found the heavenly pastures, or had, unhappily, wandered from them. Those quiet labours, which no eye sees, and no voice applauds but that of God, had no charms for him. To be heard, to be felt, to be admired, in the great congregation, was all he loved. Many are the wounded spirits which he never attempted to heal. Many the broken hearts which he never stopped to bind up. They cried for help, indeed, but

but their Levite passed by on the other side. When he should have been aiding them, he was gone to act the Apostle, or to head the Crusade, in some public enterprise, to which, not God, but his vanity had called him. Many are those of his parish whose faces he will first recognize at the bar of God—sheep which he should have carried in his bosom—children to whom he should have been as a father.—Into the secular business of his parish he entered with great eagerness; and, unfortunately for his general influence as a minister, carried into it as worldly a spirit as any of his people—thus proving that the Apostle in the pulpit was a mere man in the ordinary concerns of life; and that, like bad pictures, it was to distance rather than to colouring, his character owed even the little effect it had. His charities were extensive and shewy. Rather indeed than curtail them, he had much narrowed the education of an only son, designed for the ministry; and even delayed

delayed his payments to some by no means affluent tradesmen. And the money, thus doubtfully secured, was, in many instances, ill bestowed. His gifts were often either partial, or ostentatious. They were inscribed, for instance, on the walls of the popular chapel—but rarely on the hearts of the afflicted and unobtrusive poor. But, Sir, you will be glad, I think, to hear something of the effect of his ministry on his congregation.

'The importance then of the doctrines on which he dwelt, the vigor of his manner, and a good deal of natural eloquence, insured him a large and an attentive audience. And, such is the value of truth, even when debased by a mixture of error, that, in many instances, the happiest results flowed from his exertions. Many, through the mercy of God, received the wheat and rejected the chaff—which, with a too nearly approaching liberality, he had scattered around him. They learned from him, for example,

to love their Saviour, and that absorbed many baser emotions. They learned, also, to read the Scriptures; and, there, found the antidote, even, for their preacher's errors. To some of his hearers, however, his ministry was far from beneficial. Some timid minds were driven to despair—some bolder spirits urged to presumption. And, in general, his most ardent converts were, by no means, the most complete Christians. Their tempers especially, betrayed some defects in their religious system; and shewed that a millenium which should arise from the complete diffusion of his principles, would not be of that kind in which the 'lion should lie down with the kid.'

'But let us now, Sir, follow him into his family. As something great and public was necessary to call out his zeal, he was not likely to shine in the domestic circle. There, the stimulus of popular applause could not follow him; and, consequently, those qualities which in public

lic served in some measure to balance his defects, altogether vanished. To his wife, he was too often cold and irritable. His son, who discovered little or no bias towards religion, was repelled still further from it by the unchanging frowns of his father. Of his daughter, who had early imbibed many of his own opinions and tastes, whose person was fine, whose talents were considerable, and who, in a better soil, might have been expected to ripen into a most interesting and valuable creature, he was extravagantly fond. And, twenty years after his marriage, she alone remained to share either his joys or sorrows. His wife had died early—I will not say of a broken heart—but certainly, a troubled mind had hastened the decay of an infirm body. His son had gone to sea; and was atoning for his father's excesses in one way, by his own excesses in another. The daughter therefore alone remained to smooth the pillow of a somewhat premature old

age—to nurse him through sleepless nights, and days of pain—to calm an uneasy mind, and to supply the void created by a popularity gradually declining, as his public powers decayed.

'This daughter, however, loved him; for she had always seen his bright side. And, had her education been more complete, her mind better disciplined, her sensibility less morbid, her religion partaken less of the defects of his own—it is possible that, under the blessing of their common Father, this parsonage would have displayed one of the most beautiful of all spectacles—that of a child paying back the early tenderness of a parent, by leading his weary steps into the way of peace. But, alas! neither had oil to spare for the lamp of the other; each, like flame in the various chambers of a burning edifice, did but aggravate the other's infirmities.

'And now, I approach to the really tragical conclusion of his story. The hospitality

hospitality of Munster was a good deal confined to those who chimed in with him in religious sentiments—who, either echoed, or exceeded his own extravagancies. This select band had full range of his house. And, if they appeared to bear the test as to a few chosen points, he did not stretch them on the rack of more extended scrutiny. Among those who were thus frequent guests at the vicarage, was a person from a neighbouring village, of whom little more was known than that immediately after his first visit to Munster, he had discarded a female of suspicious character from his family, and had vehemently addicted himself to the vicarage, and to religion. These traits were a sufficient passport to the attention of both father and daughter; and before long, he was almost as necessary to the happiness of the one, as of the other. To the father, he talked upon his select topics—fighting under his banners in all controversies, and straining

straining all his extravagancies to something still more extravagant. With the daughter, he neither talked nor thought of controversies; and deluged her credulous ear with far other professions than those of piety. Of this, however, Munster was not unconscious. Nor was he displeased to learn, that he was likely to be called upon to consign a darling child to the arms of so valuable a protector. In the midst, however, of this career, a sudden check was given to the intimacy, by intelligence that the stranger was a mere adventurer and hypocrite. Munster, at once both forbad him the house, and commanded his daughter to dismiss him. But here the previous misconduct of Munster himself, and the imperfect education he had given her, began to produce their natural consequences. She had seen him so often deceived, capricious, precipitate—with all her love for him had so little respect for his judgment—and, with all her sanguine religious feeling,

feeling, so little controul over herself, that she could not, even for a moment, resolve to obey her father. And when, after a short time, having consented to clandestine meetings, the stranger loudly proclaimed his innocence, and condemned the base suspicions of her father, she soon acquiesced both in his protestations and his indignation, and agreed to an elopement and a secret marriage. What was her father's horror to miss her one morning at a breakfast table of which she had long been the only consolation—to discover that she was fled—that she had given herself to a villain, and left an aged parent to break his heart alone.

Her fate may easily be conceived.—A marriage, indeed, took place; and, for a few months, the novelty of her circumstances, and the indignation she felt against her father's conduct, and especially at his neglect to answer a letter she addressed to him, conspired to lay her conscience asleep. But soon the vi-

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sion dissolved—she received the death-blow of her happiness, and the curse of her disobedience, in the slackening attention of her husband. And at the end of a year, she was left destitute—a mother, in a state of impaired health and spirits—wanting even the means of existence, in a lodging in London. It is wonderful that, even then, her shattered mind did not break down under the burden of her calamities. But she hastened, as fast as her circumstances admitted, down to Westmoreland. It was night when she reached the parsonage. She burst open the garden door, rushed up to the window of her father's study, which looked into the garden, and at which there was a light, and saw him seated in his arm chair, pale, emaciated, insane, fastened in a straight waistcoat, and his keeper standing over him. She sunk to the ground; and when after a month, her bodily health in a measure returned, her mind, as if in sympathy with that of the parent she had

had destroyed, had contracted the disease of which he died. There were those who had seen parent and child during this month, and heard the father raving for his daughter, and the daughter raving for the father. The fact was, there had been insanity in the family; and when to a life of unusual excitement, were superadded mortified vanity, disappointed hopes, wounded affections, and, above all, certain awful glimpses of the world to come—all these had served to quicken the seeds of latent disease, and to bring him to the sad state of which his daughter had been a spectator. He sat there, like the fig-tree, cursed for unproductiveness, touched and withering under the angry hand of God. Before the month of her bodily illness was expired, he died, and his awe-struck parishioners followed to the grave a man whose misfortunes had, in their eyes, cancelled his faults; whom, if they had never loved, they had now, at least, learned to pity;

and who, they trembled to think, must have missed of that heaven which, in such ardent language, he had often displayed to them. You know, Sir, his tomb in the church-yard. I believe the dead pastor has spoken even more powerfully than the living one. Such, indeed, was the awe produced by his death, that his spirit seemed to dwell among the tombs; and few of the country-people, for a long time, crossed the church-yard, who did not look suspiciously around them, hasten their steps, and put up a prayer to God, that, in them, good principles might issue in a holy life, in obedient passions, and a resigned will.

'His daughter, as I said, recovered her bodily health, but not the tone of her mind. A cord was struck there which never ceased to vibrate. She lingered out twenty years in a neighbouring mad-house; and many of the parish, who went to visit her, brought back the most

most touching accounts of her condition. Her derangement had not suspended, though it had confused the memory of her misfortunes. Nor had her religious sensibility abated, but, on the contrary, it seemed to quicken her agonies, and to cast a more aweful character over the illusions of her mind. Combining, with the representation of scripture, the splendid images of her own heated fancy, she would occasionally present the most sublime pictures of the glories of heaven, and the triumphs of the *good*; and, then, suddenly striking her bosom, would say, "but *they* never left a father—they never dishonoured a God."'

Here the story closed, and it was well for the Vicar and his lady that it did; for age had by no means dried up the sensibilities of their nature. He had stopped, as if strangled with grief, at least twenty times in the narration before he could read it articulately. But his was not a mind likely to exhaust itself in useless

useless sorrows. Soon he began to contrast his own happiness with the calamity of his predecessor—to thank that gracious Being who had preserved him from such an abuse of religion, and to pray for power to unite, in his own life, the holy doctrines and the heavenly temper of his master. I thought, also, that I heard him say to his lady—"happy the child who is taken from the uncertain wing of his earthly parent to repose in the bosom of his God." At all events,—that this story served to reconcile him to what he had been accustomed to consider as the sternest dispensation of his life, is clear, from the following verses, which were found the next morning on the table of his study.

As the sweet flower which scents the morn
But withers in the rising day;
Thus lovely was my Henry's dawn,
Thus swiftly fled his life away.

And as the flower, that early dies,
Escapes from many a coming woe;
No lustre lends to guilty eyes,
Nor blushes on a guilty brow.

So the sad hour that took my boy
Perhaps has spared some heavier doom;
Snatched him from scenes of guilty joy,
Or from the pangs of ill to come.

He died before his infant soul
Had ever burnt with wrong desires;
Had ever spurn'd at heaven's controul,
Or ever quenched its sacred fires.

He died to sin, he died to care,
But for a moment felt the rod;
Then, springing on the viewless air,
Spread his light wings, and soared to God.

This—the blest theme that cheers my voice,
The grave is not my darling's prison;
The 'stone' that covered half my joys,
Is 'roll'd away' and 'he is risen.'

CHAPTER XIII.

The old gentleman perceived the unperused pages of his manuscript so rapidly diminish, that he was a little perplexed for some days between the desire of reading more, and the apprehension of having no more to read. His determination, however, to husband his little remaining stock soon gave way, and he began to read the history of another of his predecessors.

'I have already, Sir, stated to you some reasons why I relate to you the history of no more of your brother incumbents upon the vicarage. Some it would give me pain to relate. Of some I can find nothing to say. Among others, however, who, either did wrong, or did nothing, there were many individuals (and I say it to the honour of a church which both you and I love) worthy of the

the first and best days of religion. And of one of these, whom I shall call Berkely, I proceed to give you some account.'

" I am glad," said the Vicar, " that our friend has taken off his condemning cap. I believe the characters of ministers to have been much calumniated. And, at all events, he is no friend to religion, who delights to depreciate those who minister at her altars. It is not easy to aim a blow at the false prophet of the Lord, without wounding those whose garb he wears. It is not easy to touch a decayed stone in the altar without impairing the sanctity, or risquing the permanence, of the whole. I do not mean, however, that our gowns should shelter us from scrutiny ; but it should be cautiously begun, and kindly conducted. I have, moreover, this objection to sitting too often in judgment upon the more faulty of our fellow-creatures, that we gain nothing, but, on the contrary, lose much,

much, by learning there are others worse than ourselves. Surround a person half blind only with men totally blind, and he begins to value himself upon his powers of vision. *I* love, my dear, to rise above the degraded part of our species—to look through the long perspective of ages—to call up the mighty dead—to encompass myself with the vast cloud of witnesses who have triumphed in the contest with the powers of darkness. They both encourage me to contend, and compel me to be humble, whilst inferior men—But let us turn to the bright example which the memoir promises us." He did, and read the following history.

'*Berkely* was the son of parents, who, though both religious, differed widely in the complexion of their character. His father was a man of high and elastic spirits—attracted by large objects, and pursuing them with ardour, courage, and self-devotion. He looked over the world

world with a cheerful and thankful eye—saw good in every thing, and wondered that the servants of so good and merciful a God should ever find cause for sorrow or complaint. His defect was, perhaps, that he was less wise in council, than prompt in action—that he did not sufficiently calculate remote consequences—and sometimes produced good ends by imprudent means. The mother of Berkely, on the contrary, was a person of low, reflective, nervous temperament,—easily depressed—discerning evils at an incredible distance, and peopling earth, sea, skies, with visionary alarms. Had not the star of religion shone in upon the dark chambers of her mind, her gloom might have ended in despair. I describe the parents the more minutely, because I think that Berkely inherited some of the qualities of each—or rather their compound character. In him, that life and joy and energy which surrounded the father as a sort of perpetual atmosphere,

mosphere, only gleamed occasionally when called out by certain great objects—by the society of those he loved, by the splendid scenery of nature, or by the grand themes of religion. Then, indeed, so much more of intellect mingled with his sensations, that his joy took a nobler flight, and soared into regions denied to a less vigorous mind. At other times, the spirit of his mother seemed to descend upon him; and a state of depression followed; of depression, however, which, by exhibiting him, as it were, amidst the fires of affliction, served to display some of the most touching as well as majestic features of his character. It indicated, however, some hidden disease; and perhaps predicted the somewhat premature death that removed him from his friends. From both his parents he inherited the most exalted piety. Not, indeed, that religion descends in the blood, for the most pious parents often leave no representatives of their virtues; nor did he

he receive it as a sort of heir-loom and family portion ; for few minds were of a more deliberative and scrupulous cast. But, seeing it from his infancy, under his paternal roof, surrounded with generous and lofty qualities, his earliest prejudices were on the side of religion, his earliest studies were in pursuit of it, and his earliest decisions in its favour. But, Sir, as many of my former communications may have appeared somewhat querulous,—as I am anxious to redeem my character before we part (the Vicar here pressed the finger and thumb together which held the remaining pages of the memoir, and was shocked to feel how few they were)—as both you and I love praise, I trust, better than blame,—as, moreover, I wish to bear my testimony to the best man, except *one*, that ever possessed the living ; I am resolved to shew you him in various and distinct views, so that the whole man may pass before you.'

" Who

"Who can the 'one' be," said the Vicar.

"There can be no doubt on that point," rejoined his lady. But he unfortunately left her no time to tell us the secret, and read on.

"In order, Sir, to shew you, as it were, the key-stone of the opinions and character of Berkely, I must state to you one circumstance. From a child he had been remarkable for the most ardent attachment to his father. That name comprehended in it all that was in his eyes venerable and delightful. Hence, filial affection had become with him, not merely a feeling, but a principle. He hoped much of every man who ardently loved a good parent. He feared every thing in one who did not. Often have I seen the tear start from his eye as he read the history of Joseph; and the blood mantle in his cheek as he read that of Absalom. And such was the power of this master feeling, that it gave a peculiar character even to his religion.

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For, of all the men I ever saw, he most delighted to represent *God* under the image of a *father*. It was to him the most honourable and interesting of all titles, and he transferred it to the Being whom he best loved. You will soon perceive how much this peculiar feeling shaped and coloured all his opinions and practice.'

The old Vicar could scarcely find words to express his delight at this statement, so completely did the views of his devout predecessor harmonize with his own.

"Happy," said he, "the father of such a child."

"Happy," she replied, "the child of such a father."

"Happy, indeed," added the Vicar; "for here one virtue led to another—the love of a father to the love of God. But let us proceed."

'This peculiar feeling, as I said, Sir, gave a peculiar complexion to all his reli-

religious opinions. Thus it inclined him, I think, though he very rarely spoke upon the subject, to that system of religion which represents God as equally disposed to save *all* his creatures. The *Father* of the world was not likely, he thought, to have set aside or passed over, any part of his earthly family. In like manner, it led him to dwell, with peculiar emphasis, upon the features of *mercy* in the character of God. In the conduct of a father, the quality of love would be sure to predominate; and Berkely ever seemed to be searching out, even in the darkest of the divine dispensations, some ray of compassion which bespoke a parental hand. 'Even (he would say) amidst the monuments of wrath which sadden the face of the universe, I discern, both in man and in the world he inhabits, many splendid relics of a nobler creation.' It is, indeed, a world of ruins, but of ruins diversified and ennobled by many a lofty pillar, designating

signating the majesty of the original edifice. Look even at the most signal examples of divine vengeance, and love will always be seen sheathing or tempering the sword of justice. When, for instance, the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and a flood swept the face of a guilty world, even then, the ark surmounted the waters, and restored the only pious family to an unoccupied globe. Did the waves of the Red sea close in upon the hosts, and engulph the chariots of guilty Egypt? Behold a whole people, with their flocks and herds, preserved upon the banks of that very sea, as if to shew, that 'in judgment God remembers mercy.' Did the vault of heaven blaze with unusual fires, and empty its burning deluge on the profligate cities of the plain? There, also, the solitary servant of God is seen walking unhurt upon the fiery soil, and amidst the atmosphere of death. Even when the earth shook—when the face

of

of heaven was darkened—when the veil of the temple was rent, and the groans of nature proclaimed the just anger of God,—a voice of mercy was heard amidst the clamours and agonies of the universe—'to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise;' and the Son of God ascended to his father, not dragging at his chariot wheel thousands of his persecutors, but bearing in his arms one poor criminal rescued from the cross.' But, Sir, I must not indulge myself in recording the sayings of this good man. His language was like that of one who had been placed in the clefts of the rocks, while the divine glory passed by; who had seen, indeed, the majesty of God; but had heard him proclaim'd as a God of 'long-suffering' and of 'tender mercy.' It is enough to say that he pleaded for God in the face of a negligent world, as a son would plead for the honours and rights of a revered parent. And many were the hearts which, though unsubdued

by

by terrors, melted under the ray of his tenderness and woe.

'This same fact, to which I have referred, perhaps also, in some measure, assisted to guide his judgment in matters of controversy. His impression was, that, as the child had no right to hope he should comprehend all that was intelligible to the matured wisdom of a parent, far less should man presume to dive into the mysteries of God. This at once taught him to prefer carrying the balance, rather than the sword, amidst contending parties in religion. In his days, for instance, as it was much the fashion to dispute upon the inexhaustible topics of Calvinism and Arminianism, it was desired and expected of all to enlist themselves on one side or the other. And, as his father inclined to the former hypothesis, he was naturally expected to break his lance in favour of the divine decrees. But the young divine soon manifested a disposition, rather to

silence, than to controversy upon this disputed point. This encouraged the opposite party to range him under their banner. But, here again, his bias was rather to temper the warmth of others, than to display his own. It was not that he failed to comprehend the nature of the controversy—or that he viewed any topic of religion with indifference—or that he did not discover in the sacred volume passages favourable to each system. But he soon discovered that this controversy had fruitlessly occupied the attention, and harassed the spirits, of good men, in almost every age, and under every system of religion; and that it was not likely to be decided till 'men shall know even as they are known.' He thought the more ardent champions, on either side, generally wrong — inasmuch as both inclined to substitute their own system for the simple creed of scripture, and to twist its straight letter into all the windings of human philosophy.

philosophy. He therefore took part entirely with neither—but taught modesty and charity to both.

But I pass on, from his opinions, to his *character* as the pastor of a parish. I have said that, in forming his conception of God, he had reasoned upwards from man to God—from the image of an earthly father to the character of the great and good Being who presides over the world. On the contrary, in moulding his own character, he had reasoned downwards from God to man; and his desire was to be in his parish according to his mean ability, that which the God, of whom he was the representative, was in all the world.

'In the pulpit, accordingly, he was remarkable for speaking, not in the language of the contending parties, but in that of God. I have heard him say that 'in reviewing his own ministry, almost the only fact on which his eye rested with satisfaction, was the not being

being able to charge himself with having voluntarily employed a single text for a purpose not designed by its great author.'

'But, not only did he largely use the language of the Bible—he felt it his duty, as far as possible, to imitate the *style of reasoning* employed in it, and especially in the minority of Christ. Like him, he endeavoured to seize upon passive events or objects to illustrate his meaning—like him, to vary his subject with his audience—like him, to be simple, grave, spiritual, touching, tender. He used to say, 'I think the language of Christ is often much mistaken. Some conceive themselves his imitators, when they confine themselves to the practical parts of religion; forgetting that every fundamental doctrine of religion is strongly urged by Christ, and that its mere sublime and mysterious points, — the union of God with man, the influence of the Spirit, the precise nature of the final

judgment and happiness of man, are treated by him with a boldness and fullness, which would amount to impiety in any other teacher.' Others again conceive that they imitate him in acts of rashness and enthusiasm—forgetting that he rigidly conformed to existing rites—that he continued to worship even in those corrupt Jewish synagogues he was about to abolish—that he did not even enter upon his ministry till he was thirty years of age. Now, both these errors Berkely avoided. He taught the truth—but taught it calmly. He touched the harp of the prophet, but not with that unholy vehemence which snaps its cords.

In general, his manner in the pulpit was rather mild and paternal, than energetic. But there were times, and those not a few, when a new spirit seemed to animate him. His favourite theme was the happiness of the saints in glory; and he really spoke of heaven as though he had been there. I have now his figure

before me, as he rose up to address his congregation the first time after the death of his father. — No event had touched him at a more vital point. But, although as he mounted the pulpit, a sort of cheerless cloud hung upon his brow, in a short time, a ray from heaven seemed to disperse it. He was not afraid to touch the chord which might be expected to awaken all the anguish of his soul.— Others wept—but he was calm. He spoke of death, but it was of the death of the righteous, and of the blessedness which follows it. Such was the impression of the scene, that as his hearers watched his glowing eye, his grey hair, his peaceful smile, his uplifted hand, his lighted countenance—and saw him, as it were, launch into other worlds, and bring back their spoils to enrich himself in this— withdrawing the veil from the sanctuary —speaking of things to come as present, they looked at him almost as they would

at St. John rising from the dead, to add another scene to his celestial visions.'

'Above all, it was his anxious endeavour to display the character of Christ in his own daily intercourse with his parish. 'The life of Christ,' he was wont to say, 'was the life of God upon earth; and therefore the fit model for him who desired to be the representative of God to his parish.' 'Human laws (I have heard him observe) differ from the divine government in three points—they do not pardon the penitent—nor reward the good—nor assist men to discharge the duties, the neglect of which they punish.' 'Now, (he added), in all these points, every man, and especially a minister, should endeavour to supply, to those under his care, the deficiencies of the laws.' Such therefore, was his rule, and most simply and earnestly did he strive to adhere to it. Such was his tenderness to the penitent, for instance, that he stood condemned

demned with some of the sterner spirits in his parish for credulity. But he remembered who it was that saw the prodigal even when afar off, and made haste to meet him, and fell on his neck and kissed him. I have more than once seen him, when some poor offender asked, doubtingly, 'whether it was possible *he* could ever be forgiven,' point with an eye full of tears, to a fine picture of Mary anointing the feet of Jesus, which hung in his study. In like manner, it was his constant endeavour, as far as he was able, to reward those who deserved it. Many a child carried in its little box some cherished memorial of the kind old Vicar; and many a bible, even to this day, sheds a ray of comfort and splendour from the shelves of a cottage on which his approving hand originally placed it. As to the remaining duty of assisting his people, in the discharge of their duties, for this, he rose early, and late took rest. He built that

little

little school, and which you, Sir, so often visit—he enlarged that altar for his increasing flock of communicants, where you so often shed tears of sacred joy, as you dispense the bread of life to hungry souls.'

'I had thoughts, Sir, of shewing you this reverend man in the circle of his family. But the fact is, that his parish was only his larger family, and his family his smaller parish. Those who had seen him in the one, could determine what his conduct would be in the other. It was the same flower transplanted to a somewhat different soil. Not, indeed, that he was among those who thought that the domestic should be sacrificed to the public duties of a clergyman. On the contrary, he felt that his first duties were at home; that this was the little garden which his God expected him, first, to rescue, and fence in from the waste. 'That love,' he said, 'which pretends equally to embrace all mankind, with no peculiar affection

affection for our own family, is a circumference without a center—or no love at all.' But from the general harmony of his conduct, abroad and at home, it would, as I said, be mere repetition to describe his conduct in his own house. Here, therefore, Sir, I stop, only stating to you one circumstance, that his monument is that white old stone on the right side of the altar. A hundred times have I seen the poor and the miserable steal up to that spot, merely to lay their hand upon the stone, as though they fancied virtue would come out of it, or as though it could be to them what the man it covered, had formerly been—a sort of guardian angel — a comforter—a friend. And such is the forbearance and compassion with which the heavenly 'Comforter' views such acts of affectionate and chastised superstition, that I scarcely ever saw one of these pilgrims who did not retire with a happier countenance than he went. Others, I have seen, both

in

in prosperous and adverse circumstances, approach the stone merely to inscribe some memorial upon it—some testimony, prompted by a full heart, to him who had taught them to bear the one with patience, and to enjoy the other with moderation. These inscriptions possibly even now remain; and, perhaps, you may feel disposed to decypher them.'

Here the manuscript, as the vicar thought, and perhaps, as the reader may think, abruptly terminated. On the whole, however, it could not perhaps have terminated at a better place; partly because his eyes refused any longer to do their office, and partly because he had now a new object in the examination of this hallowed grave.

"My love," said he, "the sun will soon set, let us make haste and feast ourselves on this sacred spot. I have often observed the stone, but I little thought it was the casket of such a precious gem. There is no name inscribed upon

upon it, but I have no doubt it is written elsewhere."

She gladly obeyed, and they reached the altar just as the sun was beginning to sink in the west.

"Both," said the vicar, pointing to the descending orb — "both set, and both shall rise, in another hemisphere, and with renewed splendour."

By a sort of simultaneous impulse, natural enough to two hearts so entirely in unison, they each laid their hands upon the tomb. It was not that *they* wanted comfort, but they longed to touch the only relic of the venerable man,—and, in the best manner they could, to join hands with one to whom in spirit they were so entirely united. They soon began to search for the promised inscription, nor did they search in vain. In one place they found, half blotted as it were with tears—'My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof.' In another—'he was a good man.' In a third

third — ' the memory of the just is blessed.' In a fourth—' alas! my brother.'

Now, whether this last inscription, which is the lamentation of the ' old prophet' over ' the man of God,' suggested the idea to the vicar, or not, it is difficult to say; but he had no sooner read this, than, taking his wife tenderly by the hand—" My dear," said he, " till now, I have felt a complete indifference, so that I lay in the midst of my dear parishioners, in what precise spot this poor heap of dust and ashes should be deposited. But I feel this indifference no longer,—and, if you think me deserving the honour, I would say to you, in the words of one who like myself had deep cause, as he stood over the grave of a good man, to feel his own guilt and infirmities—' when I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre where the man of God is buried — lay my bones beside his bones.' "

As the old lady never allowed herself to think that he who was a part of her life could be taken away, and life itself be continued; and as she had always contemplated his death as the hour of his release and triumph, she cared little where the grave should be, so that she might descend to it together with him.

"How it brightens," she said, as they returned home; "the prospect of future happiness to hope that we shall see in heaven, not only the good we have known, but those of other ages whom we have not known."

"Yes," he answered, "and see them, not clothed with infirmities, but as the disciples saw Moses and Elias, on the Mount, invested in all the splendour of heaven. Nor shall we merely see them, but perhaps be placed under their tuition and guidance. They will have been daily purging off their impurities in the fountain of life, and imbibing new light in the blaze of the eternal throne. And, perhaps,

perhaps, to them it will be given, to educate those for the higher region of glory, who have recently escaped from the body. They will have 'seen God as he is' for so many ages—will have witnessed the trial and judgment of so many generations—will have enjoyed so long the perpetual sunshine of the divine presence, that they must have much to impart to those newly rescued from the chambers of darkness and of death. Our teachers here, my love, may possibly be our instructors there. And the venerable man, over whose grave you have just shed such pious tears, may be commissioned, not merely to wipe away your tears, but to teach you the song of angels, and lead you to God and to the Lamb."

In this spirit, and with these visions of glory, the aged couple reached their quiet home; and, as they stood over the lake to catch the last ray of evening, I could not help thinking its smooth and still

still illuminated surface an apt image of themselves. They had peace in their bosoms, and heaven reflected in their face. I will not say that they felt no regret at having finished the favourite manuscript. But those who enjoyed such hopes as theirs could not long want anything else to comfort them. And in these hopes they lived and died. The desire of the Vicar was fulfilled—his bones were laid by those of his predecessor—and, after a few weeks, her's were mingled with his. Of none could it be more truly said—'they were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided.'

In conclusion, I would only beg that if any of the readers of this little history should journey amidst the majestic scenery which surrounds the spot on which they dwelt, and should hear a single bell echo among the rocks, or die upon the lake beneath, he would turn aside to view the simple graves I have described.

In

In the bleak and barren mountains, or the rocky defiles around them, they may see indeed many an august monument of the power of God. But, in the tombs of these holy men, they will discover monuments of his mercy—enduring testimonies that *he* is good, and that his people are happy. And if their feelings are such as mine, they will kneel at that altar—they will pledge themselves to the service of so compassionate a God — they will say, 'let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his.'

THE END.

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